

"Plunder Island"

E.C. Segar's

POPEYE

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E. C. SEGAR



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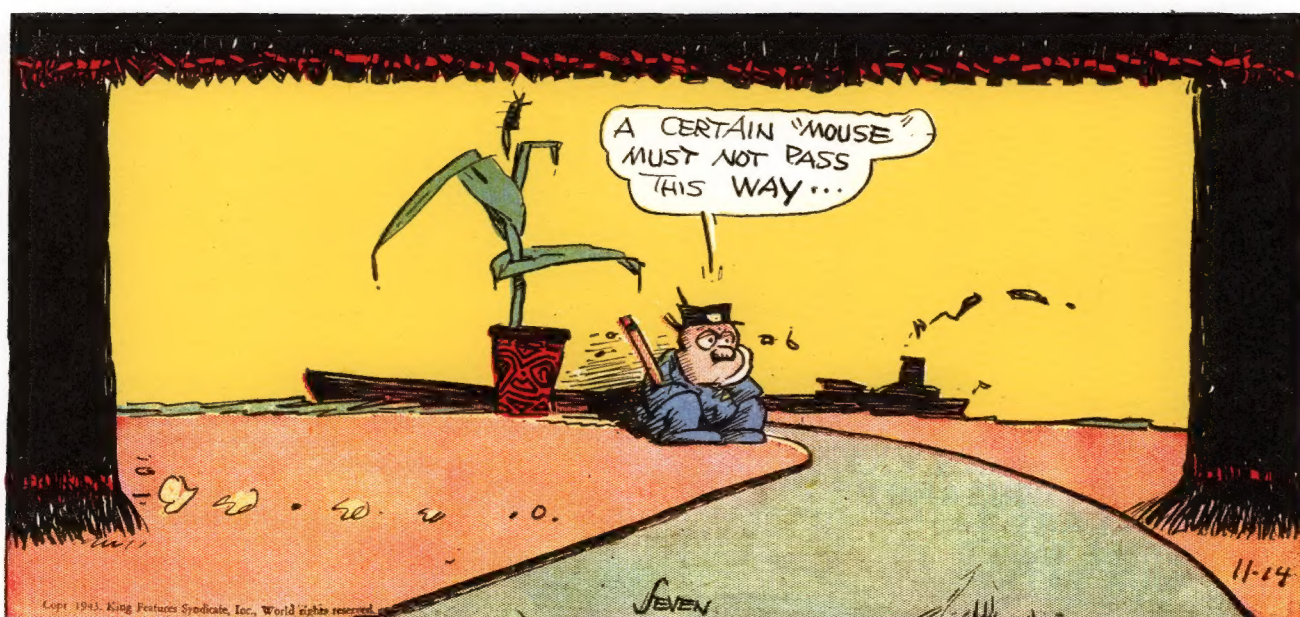
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STAGES

Introduction by Richard Marshall

FIRST, LET'S AGREE TO THE proposition that the comic strip is the logical culmination of Civilized Man's 6,000-year groping for an ideal form of communication. Then we can profitably lift the curtain, as it were, on the *Thimble Theatre*. It is not the only, or even the chief, example of my bundle of theses, but surely it is among the most representative. For all of the attention the Popeye strip deserves, and all the respect that largely has eluded it, E.C. Segar's work is far more than merely funny and clever. Indeed it stands as a creation I feel certain was more than its creator intended, perhaps more than he was aware of—which condition, if not a hallmark of great art, is frequently a handmaiden.

I will be less flippant and more serious as I invite your consideration of Segar's continuity techniques—particularly this volume's substantial "Plunder Island" sequence. In a succeeding volume's essay I will consider Segar's astonishing facility for characterization—not like (say) Al Capp's, whose characters were all satirical thrusts at facets of human nature; but more like (say) Oliver Goldsmith, whose characters, in *She Stoops to Conquer* and especially *The Vicar of Wakefield*, are vivid, memorable, and plausible to the extent they are delicious literary confections and not types. We want to call that achievement "mere entertainment" but it is more than that.

The confluence, then convergence, of creative impulses, artistic traditions, and commercial opportunities taking center-stage on the *Thimble Theatre* was rather momentous in Western culture a century ago. That it devolved into art forms like the comic strip was something that would have been denied by virtually every critic

(indeed, Gilbert Seldes and William Bolitho were two lonely voices in the wilderness); as it was, such an observation about the noble lineage, and therefore respectability, of the comic strip was usually ignored by the literary and critical communities.

Segar and most of his confrères were likely unaware of the artistic patrimony of millennia that was theirs. Except as a motive-force of his personal creative system—that is, the lexicon of reference-points and terminology of the movies—he only subconsciously incorporated the dynamics of narrative technique and visual staging. But they were there nonetheless, in large part because the times were right—what I refer to above, with faint hyperbole, as the culmination of groping for an ideal form of communication.

Literature, art, commerce, entertainment, technology didn't just converge, they collided.

To consider this cultural atom-smashing—the period immediately preceding Segar's great success—I offer you a "double-bill," a "thimble-tour" of art and literature, of semantics and what Aristotle called poetics. We shall visit the manifestations of story-and-art anteceding the age of the comic strip. Where does *Thimble Theatre* fit in traditions of entertainment, literature, and art? What category of story is the "Plunder Island" continuity in this volume? And why did Segar consistently frame his stories in the parlance, perhaps even the camouflage, of stage and screen clichés?

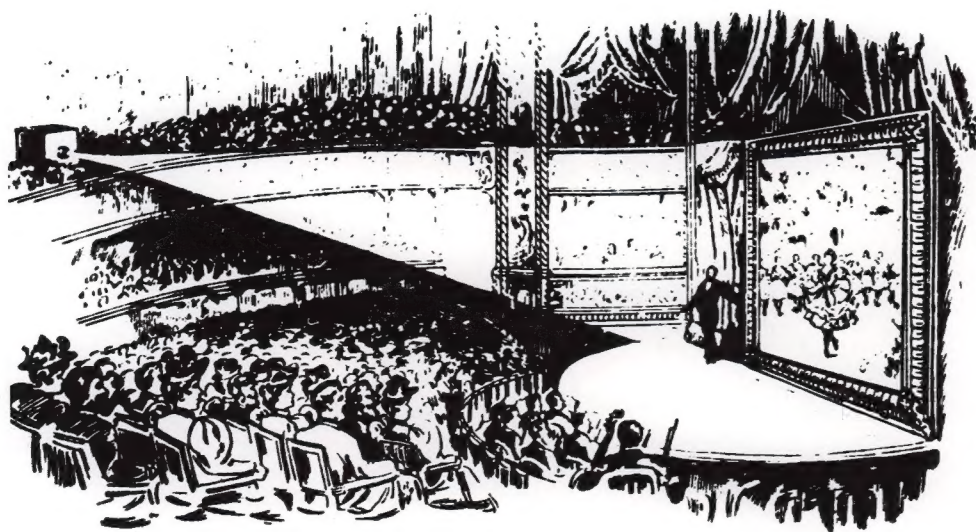
I.

Through the millennia, societies and individuals have told stories, which is prosaic as a fact, but protean in implication.

Myths are mostly true, and history is (as Napoleon reminded us) agreed-upon fables; and upon such apparent intuitive dissonance is built the foundation, indeed the virtual cathedrals, of a culture's intellectual history. Alphabets, even the Roman but especially various Eastern typographies, were originally ideograms or pictograms: two-dimensional representations of objects and, eventually, concepts. This mode survived in the reverence and elegance accorded to the presentation of Holy Scriptures in scrolls and books; and (as semioticians discovered after the fact) in the sound-effects and onomatopoeia of comic strips.

Meanwhile, representational art appeared on cave-walls, and designs on urns and columns; was woven into large tapestries and printed on small handbills; always telling stories. Henry Adams in *Mont-Saint-Michel et Chartres* tells how stained-glass windows and pulpit-carvings told entire Bible tales to the illiterate of the so-called Dark Ages, which is plainly evident even to wise old literates like us today; but, further, how elemental factors like the shapes of chapels and the colors of decorations served narrative functions, too. The putative ignorant masses knew that special language: what to recognize and how to understand. In some schools of late-Gothic and early-Renaissance art—but more frequently in Oriental art—painters, in an effort to tell stories, often pictured the same characters more than once in the same image-frame, striving to depict not motion but the passage of time. To tell a story, not display a vignette. It was not illogical; it exercised a different logic, and served the function of storytelling.

For centuries, in other words, art served an important literary purpose. And at



The Vitascope being Exhibited in a Theatre or Public Hall.

(The machine can be just as successfully exhibited in vacant store-rooms, etc.)

the same time—not in opposition, but in unique harmony—language and the written word were artistic forms, as expressive as the ideas behind them.

Johannes Gutenberg ended all that.

This otherwise commendable fellow, probably unintentionally, made a homeless waif of representational art for several centuries. Ideas became the virtually exclusive domain of books and pamphlets and handbills. Even fantasy and imagination, a logical domain of the unfettered painter or penman, largely was appropriated by the writing craft. As literacy spread, art and sculpture became sidelines, specialties, and conceits. Books were published, and artists evolved into illustrators serving writers and their words. Art—naturally; inevitably—careened toward non-representational and abstract modes. An intellectual imperative; expressive determinism at work, when the original functions were co-opted.

But the pre-Gutenberg life-forms of that creature whose DNA carried art-as-narration and literature-as-visuals began to stir again in the 19th century. Magic-lantern shows attempted to merge pictures and stories. So did the picture-stories of Rodolphe Töpffer and Wilhelm Busch. Dioramas in public places and posed *tableaux* in parlor entertainments struggled toward the same. The scores, probably hundreds, of primitive animation toys and machines in the 19th century groped toward the same thing. Cartoonists (who, as a profession, had carried the torch for independent imagery through the years in political cartoons and caricatures) began to experiment with multi-panel “series.” Many things yearned in a reawakened intellectual and artistic imperative for the reunion of story and art.

II.

Then came the confluence, eventually convergence: the ultimately happy collision. There were prototypes and parallel movements across the globe, particularly Europe and specifically France; however, the long-awaited family reunion of story and art’s interrelated functions occurred in the United States particularly, and New York City specifically: Manhattan Island. A few blocks north of Union Square, even more specifically. Over a two-year period between 1894 and 1896, most specifically. And remarkably.

In that time and that place a group of people—with occasional overlap, but largely

independently; and doubtless ignorant of or unconcerned with *any* of the intellectual traditions outlined above—were the pioneers of forms of expression whose impact was revolutionary but whose pedigrees, as we have seen, were as old as images smeared on cave walls to tell the news of a hunt.

We are talking about the comic strip, the animated cartoon, and the motion picture.

Cartoonists expanded their role from politics and social commentary and began to tell stories. Sequential narratives were expanded from European penny-sheets domestic children’s publications. In the 1890s they were the constituency of humor magazines and experimental newspaper supplements; commercial rivalries between publishers—seizing upon the opportunities offered by color printing technology and mass distribution; i.e., commercial motives—propelled the comic strip to an exalted place in the marketplace and the culture.

Animation—making pictures move—was a fairly elemental urge of artists from the distant ages when sticks with burnt ends were used for drawing instead of, or anyway in addition to, impaling adversaries. During the 19th century, simple flip-books gave way to complicated instruments and devices, all based on tricking the eye—persistence of vision was discovered as something that, when mastered, simulated life: a sort of alchemy of the senses. (Peter-Mark Roget, thesaurian, had identified, labeled, and discussed it as early as 1824.) Complicated toys were the immediate predecessors of the animated cartoon, the missing link in this particular evolution being technology. Photography, flexible film, projectors, animation techniques like repeated sequences, celluloid (invented as a by-product of the attempt to find a substitute for billiard-ball ivory), production-staffs and assembly-lines... all that was needed were dark theaters, folding chairs, and tickets. Maybe popcorn. Until our magical 1894-1896 period, the prototypical animation devices were not cameras and projectors but contraptions going back to DaVinci with names like the Scioptic Ball, Magascope, Thaumatrope, Phenakistiskope, Foucauld’s Stereofantascope, Zoetrope, Praxinoscope, and the good old Zoopraxiscopes. Just with regard to terminology, “cartoons” must indeed have been a welcome innovation.

The motion picture was successfully developed in the 1870s by Thomas Alva

Edison but gathered dust in his laboratory because his fixation was to combine it with sound and restrict it to “peep-boxes” instead of large-screen projection (he supposed his profits would be greater in that marketing plan). In 1894, however, like a happily spreading bacillus, motion pictures projected on sheets were born and proliferated, inhabiting makeshift theaters and popular vaudeville houses, variously surprising audiences and making them motion-sick, the primitive little presentations making up rules of photoplays and breaking them. Worse than that (no, probably better than that) was, as in the newspaper art departments nearby, there were wholesale raids of staffs, the wildcat pioneers of the movies broke laws, stole patents, faked news footage, counterfeited documents, and kidnapped equipment. There are more ridiculous chases and slapstick face-offs *behind* the cameras than as part of slapstick movie scenarios of those early days.¹

Whether civilization was straining for a return to richer means to express, communicate, and create; or the ant-hill of hustlers and clever innovators around Union Square were amazingly fecund during this brief pixilated period... a revolution was taking place. Once Art and Story were reunited, they gave birth, so to speak, to surprising offspring. A large family, in fact. For what the comics, animation, and movies did was to seize upon the possibilities of bending time and space; manipulating the audiences’ perceptions; distort, or create, reality; and, in fact, create new languages, vocabularies, and syntaxes. Most of these expressive opportunities were inherent in the forms and therefore introduced and developed, if at all, oftentimes unconsciously by the pioneers. We can be sure that the tools were underutilized, too, because more than a century later the three art forms scarcely have yet realized their potential either.

III.

But the history of art—that is, what is interesting and instructive about artistic evolutions—is not told in the end-result or the final stages, but the Process. So we come, relatively early in the history of comic strips, to a figure, Elzie Crisler Segar, who uniquely embodied and now represents these traditions. As far as we know he never intellectualized his approach to cartooning, but we can look back on *Thimble Theatre* and take satisfaction that, as with the best comic-strip cartoonists (indeed, a general rule for many artists), his excellence was in direct proportion to the unselfconscious aspect of his work.

The strip’s panel, the theater’s stage, and

1. Researching a book I am writing on the cross-pollination of comics, movies, and animation has led me to discover creative parallels whose coincidences confirm the thesis that Western culture was inexorably revealing the need for, and exercising the development of, new plastic forms of communication. The colorful personalities of the pioneers is icing on the cake of the historical narrative; the marked presence of technology and commercialism (i.e., often, greed) is what sets the story apart slightly from other revolutions in world art. But I am mindful that these forces were at play outside lower Manhattan: In 1894-96 there were similar public exhibitions of primitive projected motion pictures in France, Germany, and England, all independent of each other.

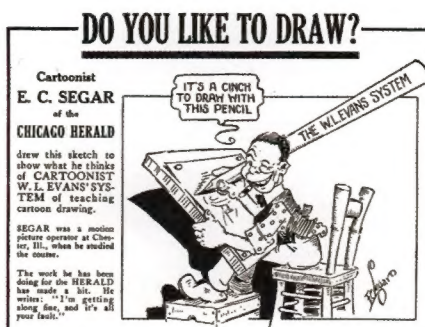
the movie's screen are virtually identical image-frames; and cartoonists are blessed with the most plastic means of the three forms for telling their stories. Through the years the differences as well as the similarities—the affinities of the stage as the audience sees it—have been irresistible to a number of comic-strip creators. Cartoonists from Winsor McCay to Walt Kelly have drawn their characters transforming their two-dimensional environment into the three-dimensional worlds they are supposed to be. Panel borders have occasionally become stage wings, characters (or the cartoonist, via captions) have talked to readers apart from the dramatic continuity; the fourth wall frequently has been broken. George Herriman, illogically (of course) but not unconsciously abruptly would depict one panel of a sequence framed in footlights and curtains. But of all of America's great comic-strip artists, no cartoonist dwelt more on theatrical references than E.C. Segar; no cartoonist so consciously intertwined the conventions of stage and cinema with those of comics, nor so cleverly and joyously.

Many aspects of his work continually mirrored elements in his personal life and his predilections. Elzie Crisler Segar was born in the Camptown section of Chester, Illinois (yes, the setting of the old song "Camptown Races," doo-dah, doo-dah), on the banks of the Mississippi River, on December 8, 1894. His grandfather had settled in the Midwest and found work as a distributor of olive oil, of all things, foreshadowing Olive Oyl, the star of the very first *Thimble Theatre* episode years later. When he was 12 Elzie secured a job at the local Opera House, and when it had made its full transition (from vaudeville, not opera) to a motion-picture theater, his chores included changing the posters, drawing show cards, playing the drums in the pit (the "orchestra" otherwise consisted of a lone piano), and, eventually, running the projectors. So proud was Segar of his work as projectionist of the flickering images and shadow stories that he reportedly had MPO—Motion-Picture Operator—tattooed on his forearm.

And so enamored was he of the tele-scoped tales that could amuse and thrill audiences that he regularly recreated movies' plots outside the theater, drawing comic-strip versions in chalk on the sidewalk.

Segar's penchant for drawing led him to subscribe to the W.L. Evans Correspondence Course in Cartooning. Mail-order lessons proliferated in the 'teens, and the Evans Course was second only to the Landon "School" in teaching the proper method of depicting wrinkles, frowns, sweat beads, and those little shadows that always lurk beneath cartoon characters' shoes. In 1916 he moved to Chicago and, according to legend, an interview with the famous R.F. Outcault (creator of the *Yellow Kid* and *Buster Brown*) led to employment on the *Chicago Herald*. At that stage of his career, E.C. Segar was possibly the worst working cartoonist in America. But he was clearly the luckiest.

James Keeley of the *Herald* had been a legendary manager of the *Chicago Tribune*, standing out among other newspapermen in the Golden Age of newspapers in the city where *The Front Page* was a few years



from being written in part to immortalize the flavor of newspaper work in the town. Among Keeley's least flashy but most innovative experiments had been commissioning the work of Lyonel Feininger for the *Trib's* comic section. Having left the *Tribune* and yet destined to work for Hearst in Chicago, Keeley wanted to make a splash on the *Herald*. In 1916 he signed a contract that seemed sure to add luster to his paper's pages: *Charlie Chaplin's Comic Capers*, an officially licensed property depicting the misadventures of the most visible and popular face in America.

Keeley had Chaplin, and—by some working of fate, because considerations of drawing skills if not talent would have scotched the deal—Segar had the *Chaplin* strip. Here was one more incidence of movies and comics intersecting in Segar's career: the convergence of two of the era's great comedic talents was pregnant with potential significance... but the result was insipid at best. Segar's drawings were vapid, his gags weak, and the construction flimsy. The strip is a bizarre footnote in Chaplin historiography—it was killed in a year, and was surpassed by another, unlicensed, far superior strip by the forgotten genius Ed Carey—and is itself only a footnote in the Segar chronology.

By 1917 Segar's strip was as mute as Charlie himself, or, rather, was muted. The license with the Essanay studio expired, but in any event the strip was not stealing the public's heart away; three anemic reprint books represented a faint breath of life during its run. Segar developed another strip, actually an outgrowth of later *Chaplin* episodes, elevating a minor character—an understudy as it were. *Barry the Boob* was the star of a new strip, and the *War to End All Wars* provided a setting to start a New Strip. *Barry* differed little from the *Chaplin* strip—slapstick gags, weak art—and paled further in the *Herald's* comic section alongside a surprising pair of talented newcomers, Billy DeBeck and Frank Willard (later to draw *Barney Google* and *Moon Mullins*, respectively). Another *Herald* comic strip of the late 'teens, drawn by a succession of the paper's cartoonists, was, interestingly, called *Movies*, a parody of movie serials, starring one Haphazard Helen. Segar seemed to be a magnet for this affinity of comics and movies!

Movies was only one of several strips of the day that very consciously borrowed from, or parodied, stage or motion-picture elements. CW Kahles in 1906 had created *Hairbreadth Harry*, which cleverly satirized cliffhangers while also pioneering continuity-strip forms. Loose storylines ran from week to week, and Kahles inter-cut breathless narration with his characters' dialog. Harry Hershfield worked in a similar mode

with two early classics, *Desperate Desmond* and *Dauntless Durham of the U.S.A.*; he followed in footlights as well as footsteps with the strips, which were replete with stock villains and hoary clichés of road-actors' plays and primitive nickelodeons. In *Judge* magazine George Carlson drew crowded pages with as many as 40 panels—*Judge's Movies* even contained a parody "card" that read "Passed by the National Board of Censors" in the manner of neighborhood movies.

The curtain fell on *Barry the Boob* when the *Chicago Herald* folded, an event that was not calamitous for Elzie Segar. William Randolph Hearst bought the newspaper à la Hearst; that is, with its entire staff, and overnight the cartoonist found himself on the staff of a leading paper, the *Chicago American*. He was soon drawing a unique cartoon feature, no longer a strip, but significantly one that was still concerned with the theater. *Looping the Loop* was a one-column vertical hodgepodge of current events in the Windy City, but usually concerned with theatrical doings and visiting celebrities. Here the quality of Segar's artwork was not a major drawback, for his tiny images were practically doomed to be glorified stick figures; and his narrative talents were not tested by the vignette/news-item structure.

It was on *Looping the Loop* that Segar found his first success, evidently attracting the personal attention of Hearst headquarters in New York staff. He was summoned thither in 1919 to join the staff of Hearst's *Evening Journal* and charged with creating a strip, but not out of whole cloth, and—again!—dependent upon an association with movies.

It was a rare occasion when cartoonists were lured away from the Hearst stable, but it happened in the case of Ed Wheelan, who left Hearst to join the fledgling George Matthew Adams Service in 1919. E.C. Segar was assigned the task of replacing Wheelan's feature with something similar; interestingly (predictably?), a daily parody of stage melodrama! Wheelan's strip had been *Minute Movies*—at Adams it was transmogrified as *Minute Movies*, destined, by the way, for a long life—starring a cast of paper actors who assumed roles in various strip-stories. Wheelan even "cast" himself in a studio role as the strip was "presented" by Wheelan Pictures, Ink. His various players consisted of characters with names like Dick Dare, Ralph McSneer, Blanche Rouge, Fuller Phun, and Hazel Dearie, all introduced in iris-shots as each story commenced.

Hearst was notorious for filling one hole in the dyke with a fistful of fingers. In the 1930s, for instance, he desired to beat *Dick Tracy*, a hit created by another Hearst ren-



Top: Advertisement in *Cartoons Magazine* for the W. L. Evans Correspondence cartooning course. Segar himself had barely "graduated" from the course, and in any event was (at least at that stage of his career) not a very compelling example of skills that could be learned.

Right: A panel from *Charlie Chaplin's Comic Capers* (1917), a collection of the Keeley-distributed strip published by Donohue.

egade, Chester Gould—who, by the way, drew another movie-company parody, *Fillum Fables*, for Hearst before leaving for the *Chicago Tribune*. King Features Syndicate launched not one, but four, crime strips in the effort (*Inspector Wade*; *Red Barry*; *Radio Patrol*; and *Secret Agent X-9*). But Segar's comic strip was more memorable than *Fillum Fables* was to be, and more memorable than *Midget Movies* was.

Thimble Theatre made its debut in the *Evening Journal* on Dec. 19, 1919. Like its alliterative forebears it featured a cast of play-

ers whose eponymous comic-strip names were presented as if on a marquee or title credits, along with their "character" names for each day's episode. Each of those episodes was titled, and—in an apparent nod to cliff-hanging aspects of stage and screen—the next day's strip title was previewed. The players on the very first day consisted of Olive Oyl (as Lizzie Lampshade) and Harold Hamgravy (as Jed Simpson); soon Harold became Ham Gravy, Olive's constant suitor. A villain named Willie Wormwood entered and soon departed from the tiny stage. At first glance the glorified stick figures merely resembled the serviceable population of *Looping the Loop*, and the boxed strip (two panels stacked in each of three tiers) ribbed stage melodramas and movie serials in a respectable though hardly outstanding manner.

IV.

The previous volumes in this series have displayed Segar's evolution as a storyteller, and *Thimble Theatre*'s evolution as a masterpiece. A modest progression, to be sure; if Segar ever had a creative epiphany, it was quiet.

By the time of this volume's episodes, the cartoonist had reached a plateau, a pleasing but unpretentious level. In keeping (in yet another example) with the touchstones of the movie-screen and theatrical-stage, Segar rarely moved his camera, seldom showing close-ups or long shots. The sophistication of his artwork... well, I'm reminded of Ron Goulart's observation that Segar often drew his characters, when they ran, extending left legs and left arms forward simultaneously (or, of course, the right limbs together). Go ahead, put this book down and try it yourself.

But the point about Segar—and the point about what constitutes a great comic-strip artist—is not the strictures but the freedom; not the old definitions but the new definitions; in post-modern parlance, not the answers but the questions. The signs and symbols in *Thimble Theatre* were not shorthand for old structures (and certainly not tricks to cover Segar's technical limitations) but the comfort-food recipe of the entire production—easy drawing, outrageous characters with outrageous traits, a mixture of humor, pathos, melodrama, and farce. An integrated, organic creation: greater than the sum of its surface shortcomings.

As an example we come to the "Plunder Island" story. For all of Popeye's popularity, assuming center stage after a decade of the ensemble's toil, the strip's title remained *Thimble Theatre*. But the elements of farce melodrama—the conscious appropriation of clichés of stage and screen—continued with a hilarious vengeance. In an abrupt shift, however, from the strip's light-comedy tone, *Thimble Theatre* in 1935 turned to macabre suspense, an episode that was epic, at least in length, and close to saga in form, titled (as readers were periodically reminded—in movie-promo style) "Plunder Island."

It was a meaty episode, almost eight months in length, and featured a galaxy of singular characters like the murderous Sea Hag and the bizarre Alice, the Goon. The Sea Hag became Popeye's nemesis, reappearing through succeeding years; and the Goon was so ghastly—she was an alien creature, naked except for fur, speaking in oscillo-



scope-patterns—that client newspapers supposedly passed along accounts of young readers having nightmares. The Goon eventually turned on the Sea Hag and became a sympathetic character.

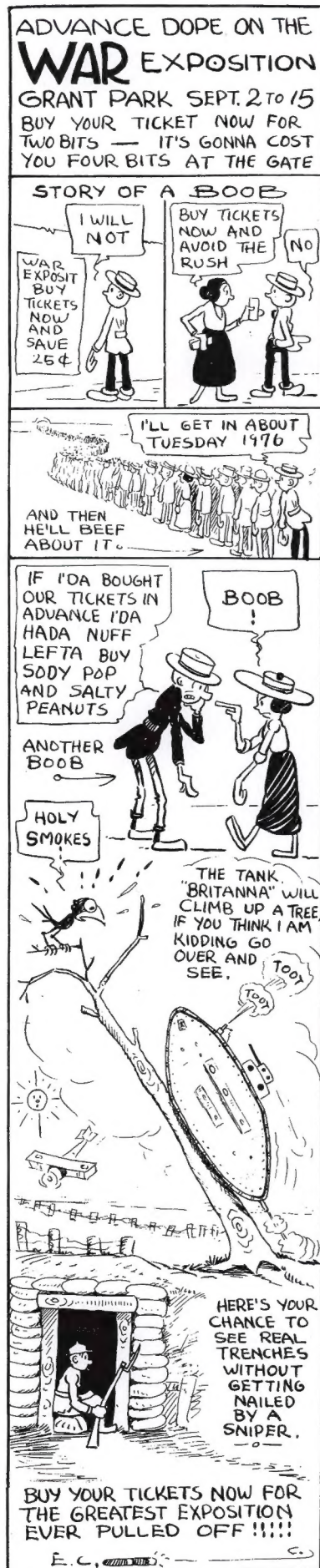
In "Plunder Island" we note the maturity of Segar as a comic-strip creator. In no episode does he more rely on the clichés of stage and early cliff-hanger movies... yet in no episode is there purer exercise of the absolutely unique expressive elements of the comic strip.

It was in the "Plunder Island" episode that I realized not just the futility, but the irrelevance, of pinning the wings of Segar to a felt board, as lepidopterists do with butterflies—studying them, but snuffing them out at the same time. Parody? Farce? Melodrama? Suspense? Epic? Humor? Surrealism? A comic strip doesn't have to be one or the other—and doesn't even have to stop at being *all*. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* was an *opera buffa* by his own description—a "comic opera" despite the depiction of a seducer who comes to bitter ends, a story replete with elements of violence, attempted rape, betrayal, and murder.

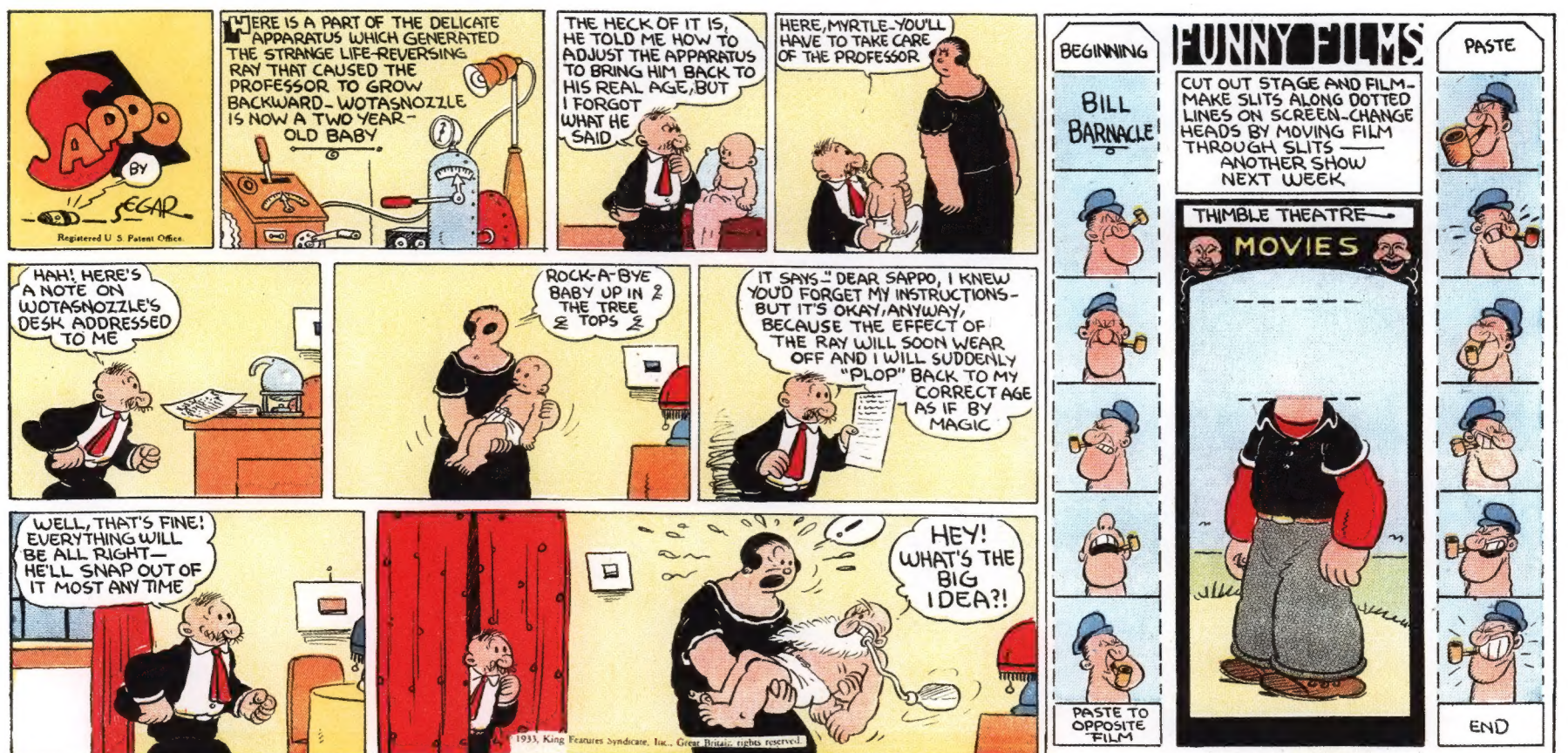
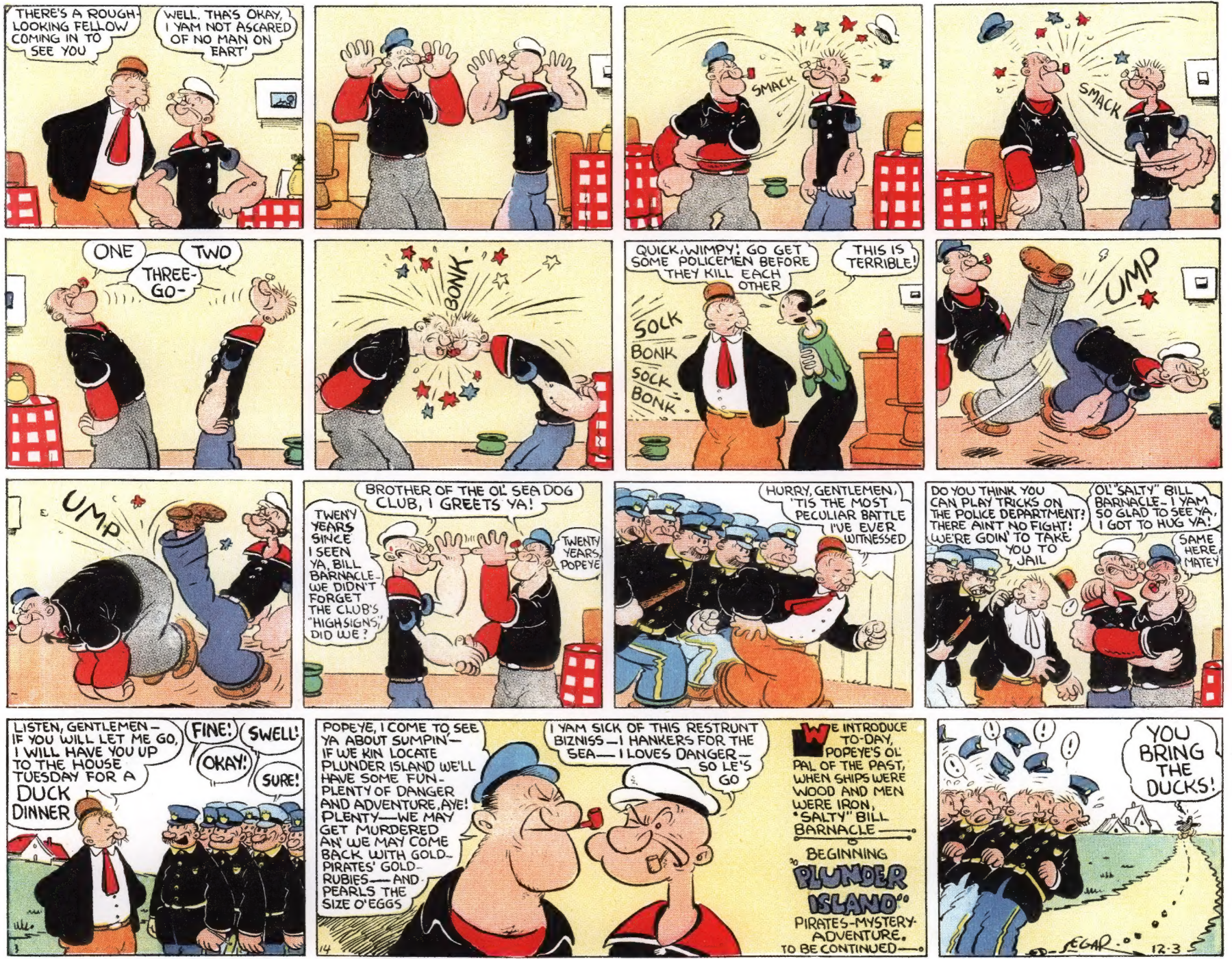
In the same way "comic" strips should not be pigeonholed by the humor-quotient (although Segar could make us laugh out loud) nor the eccentricity of the cast (although, a shade deeper, the *Thimble Theatre* cast's quirks could make us misty-eyed). No pigeonhole. Just a theatre.

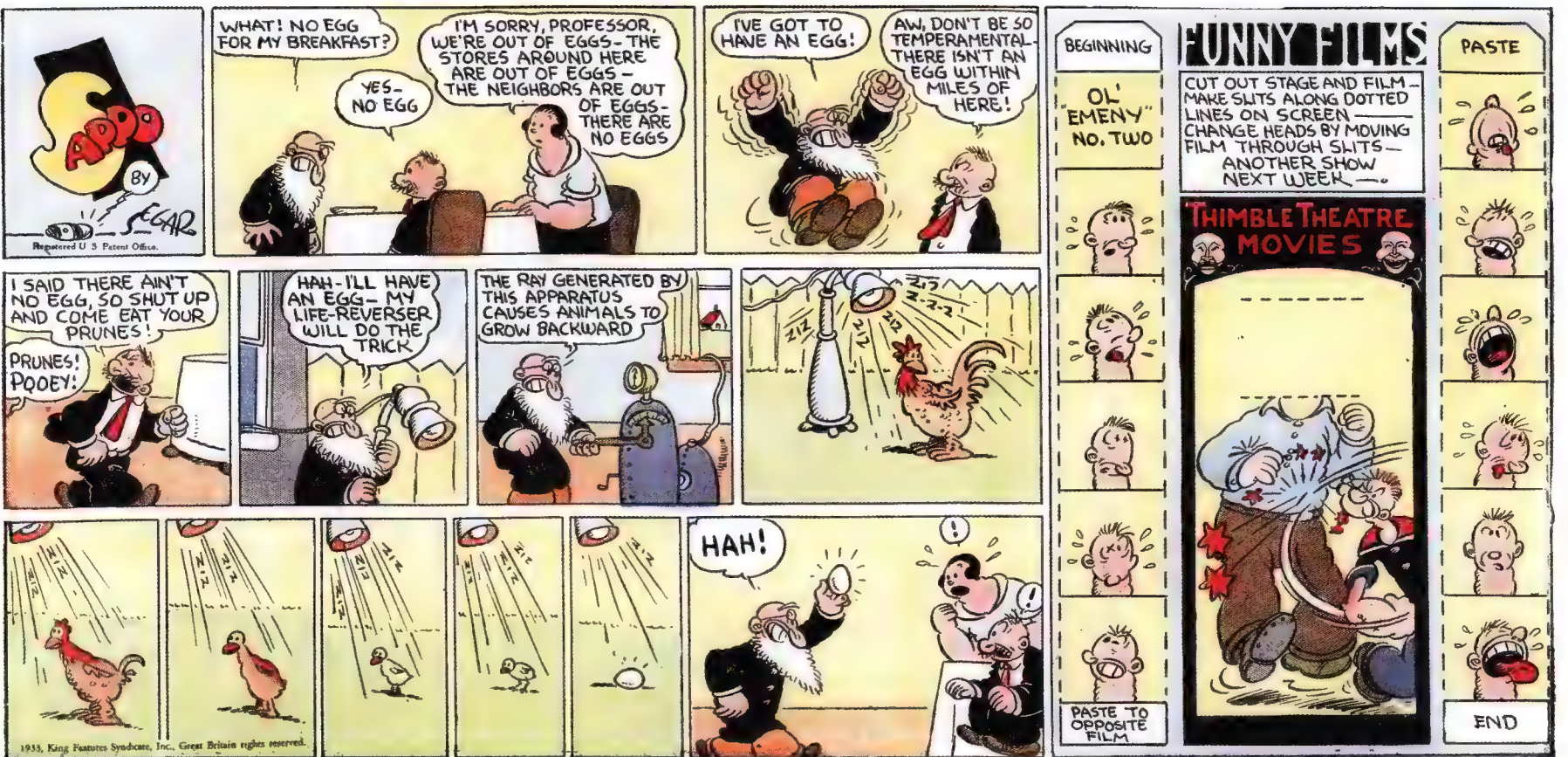
And as only can happen in a comic strip, a "thimble" theatre is not tiny but limitless, as large as the imagination of cartoonist E.C. Segar could imagine.

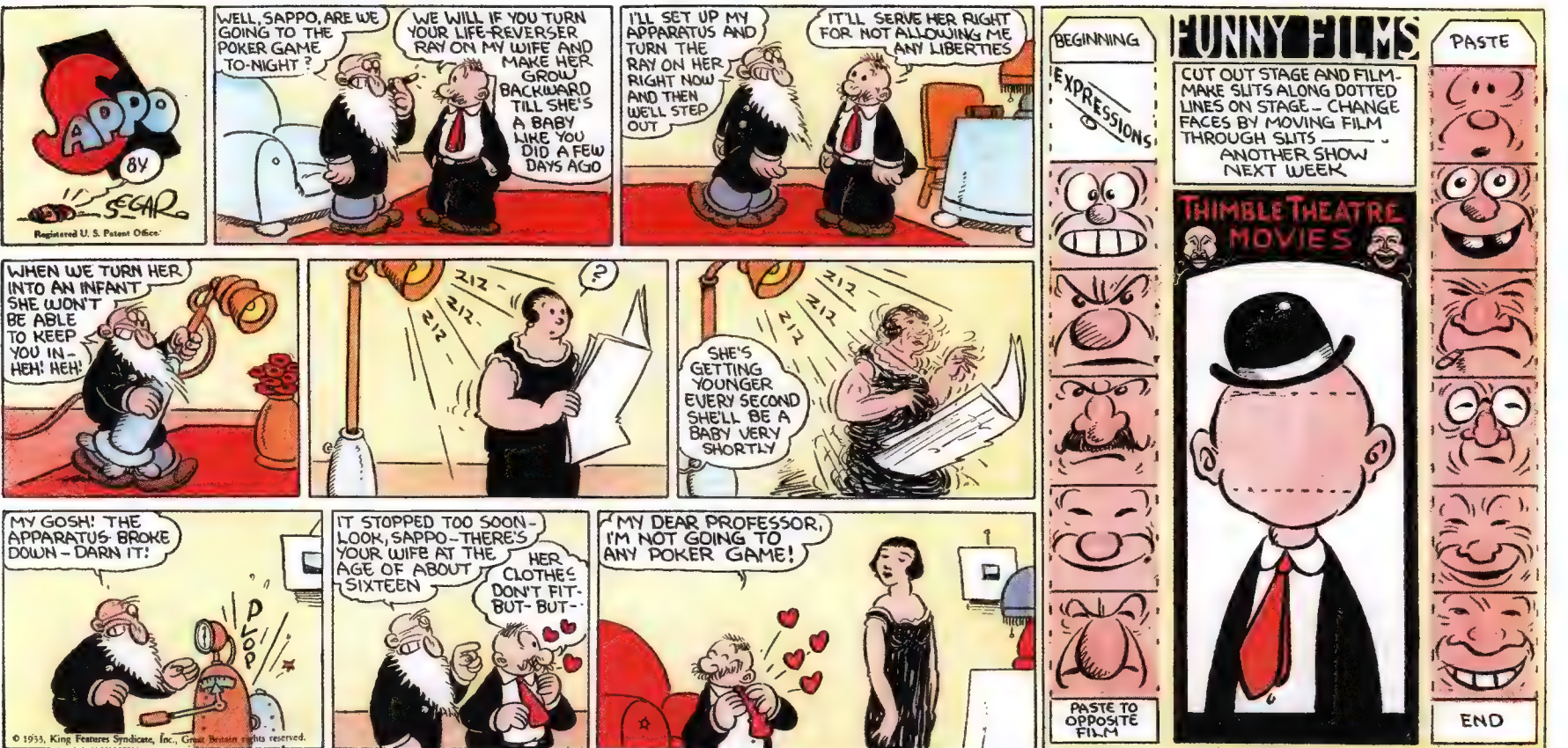
Richard Marschall is the author or editor of more than 60 books, mostly on popular culture, but ranging from music history to apologetics. He has written hundreds of magazine articles for periodicals as diverse as *The Comics Journal* and *The Columbia Journalism Review*. He was the founding editor of *nemo: the classic comics library* and *Hogan's Alley, Journal of the Cartoon Arts*. A former political cartoonist, Marschall has served as comics editor of three newspaper syndicates; Editor at Marvel Comics; and script writer for Disney Comics. He has spoken abroad for the U.S. Information Service of the State Department, and was consultant for the USPS commemorative set of 20 stamps for the comics' centennial.

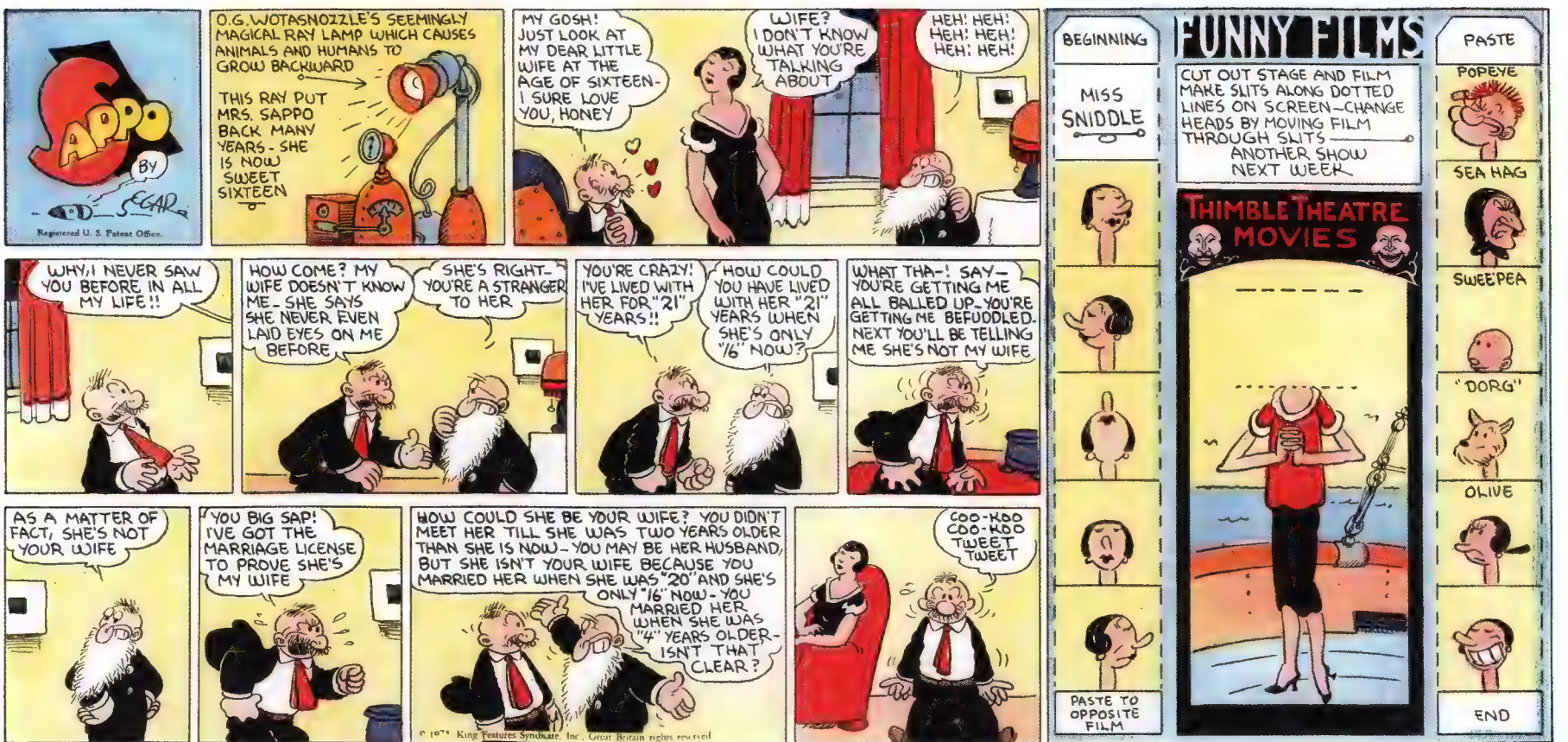


Left: *Looping the Loop* played to Segar's strengths (or at least dodged his weaknesses somewhat). This is an August, 1918 episode, from the *Chicago Daily American*. Top-right: The very first *Thimble Theatre* episode, from December 19, 1919, does not exactly presage greatness.

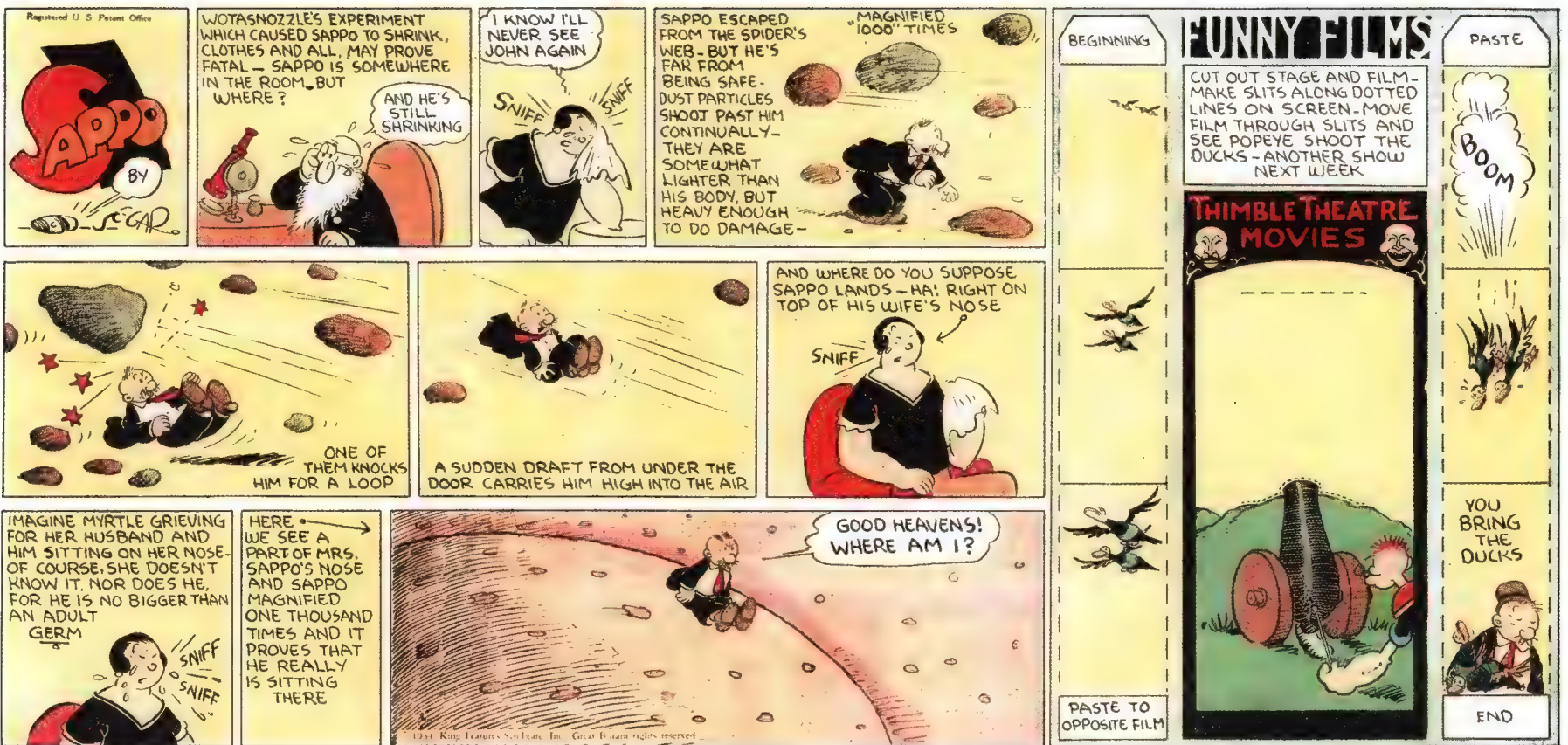














THE SEA HAG COMMANDED WIMPY TO CUT OFF POPEYE'S HEAD— WIMPY FAILED SEVERAL TIMES— FINALLY THE OLD WITCH THREATENED TO THROW J. WELLINGTON TO THE SHARKS IF HE DID NOT DECAPITATE THE ONE-EYED SAILOR. POPEYE TOOK AN OLD BARREL APART CUT A HOLE IN THE BOTTOM FOR HIS NECK THEN WIMPY PUT IT BACK TOGETHER AROUND HIM— THE RESULT FOOLED HER COMPLETELY—

I LOVE YOU MORE NOW, MR. WIMPY, YOU HAVE PROVED YOUR NERVE— DO YOU STILL THRILL AT MY PROXIMITY?

MOST OF A CERTAINITY, DEAR LITTLE SEA HAG OF MINE

THAT HEAD LYING THERE SO COLD AND STILL PROVES THAT NO MAN CAN DEFEAT ME— HAH! AM I NOT THE QUEEN OF THE SEVEN SEAS?

AND I, J. WELLINGTON WIMPY, AM KING OF THE SEVEN SEAS, THE GREAT LAKES AND THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

AND ALL THE LITTLE BROOKLETS

HAGGIE, YOU HAVE INSPIRED ME! DIDST KNOW I AM A POET? A POET OF NO MEAN ABILITY, E'EEN NOW THERE IS A POEM IN MY HEART, AYE, AND A SALTY ONE AT THAT

LET'S HAVE IT

'TIS OF YOU AND OF ME, HAGGY

WE SLEW OUR FOES, MY SWEETHEART AND ME, AND STREAMS OF CORDUSCLES FLOWED TO THE SEA—

I'LL DO THIS WITH GESTURES

ALL OVER THE WALLS AND ON THE FLOOR, WERE BUCKETS AND BUCKETS AND BUCKETS OF GORE

WE STEPPED ON THEIR NECKS, ON THOSE SLIPPERY DECKS, AS MY SWEETIE AND ME WENT AFT'— AND AMID ALL THIS, SHE GAVE ME A KISS, AND AMID ALL THIS WE LAUGHED

FOR SHE WAS THE HAG OF THE SEVEN SEAS, AND I WAS HER UNDERSTUDY, AND NEVER A TREMOR RAN THROUGH HER KNEES, THOUGH DECKS WERE BEFOULED AND RUDDY,

IN THE DEPTHS OF HER EYES, WAS THE BLUE OF THE SKIES, AS WELL AS THE SHADOWS OF NIGHT, AND I'LL SING HER LOVE'S SONG, E'EEN THOUGH SHE'S ALL WRONG, FOR I, TOO, AM NOT IN THE RIGHT

THAT WAS BEAUTIFUL, MR. WIMPY, HORRIBLY BEAUTIFUL— I WILL REWARD YOUR GENIUS BY GRANTING YOU THREE WISHES, PROVIDED I AM ABLE TO GRANT THEM— WHAT WILL YOU HAVE?

MY FIRST WISH IS A HAMBURGER— MY SECOND IS A HAMBURGER— MY THIRD IS A HAMBURGER

SOMETIMES I DOUBT YOU, MR. WIMPY— IS IT ME YOU LOVE OR IS IT THE HAMBURGER IN MY REFRIGERATOR?

IT'S THE HAMBURGER !!!

EH?— DID YOU SAY THE HAMBURGER? I BEG PARDON?

DID YOU SAY, IT'S THE HAMBURGER?

HOW YOU TALK! IT MUST BE YOUR EARS— I WILL GIVE YOU A TEST AND PROVE THAT YOUR EARS ARE DECEIVING YOU

I AM GOING TO SAY A WORD AND I WANT YOU TO TELL ME WHAT WORD I SAY

"NEW YORK"

YOU SAID NEW YORK

WRONG

I SAID "CONSTANTINOPLE"

MERCY! ARE MY EARS THAT BAD?

YOU KNOW I LOVE, YOU— DID I NOT DECAPITATE MY FRIEND TO PLEASE YOU?

PUFF PUFF

YOUR EYES ARE LIKE DISTANT STARS RADIANT WITH ATOMIC FIRE— YOU ARE THE ACME OF FEMININITY

PUFF PUFF

2-18 CONTINUED

REGAR

Registered U. S. Patent Office

SAPPO BY REGAR

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

PROFESSOR, YOU MUST INVENT SOMETHING THAT WILL CAUSE MY HUSBAND TO GROW LARGE AGAIN— HE MAY BE ON THE FLOOR AND WE MIGHT STEP ON HIM AND SQUASH HIM

WE COULDN'T SMASH HIM. HE'S ONLY ABOUT ONE BILLIONTH OF AN INCH HIGH BY NOW

DON'T THINK I'M NOT TRYING TO BRING HIM BACK— I'VE SPENT \$700,000— ON SPECIAL APPARATUSES— I'M TRYING TO PRODUCE A SUPER "Z" RAY

NOTHING ON EARTH WILL CAUSE HIM TO GROW BACK BUT THE POWERFUL SUPER "Z" RAY

I'VE DONE IT— I'M GENERATING SUPER "Z" RAYS

IN THE MEANTIME SAPPO IS BEING CHASED BY A COVEY OF HAY FEVER GERMS

HE IS RUNNING WITH ALL HIS MIGHT, BUT IT WOULD TAKE HIM—

TWO WEEKS TO RUN A QUARTER OF AN INCH— MERCY! ONE OF THE GERMS GOT HIM

—BUT SAPPO GETS OUT HIS KNIFE, WHICH SHRUNK ALONG WITH HIM AND HIS CLOTHES, AND CUTS HIS WAY THROUGH THE GERMS TOUGH HIDE— THE PROFESSOR HAS INVENTED A RAY WHICH SHOULD CAUSE SAPPO TO GROW BACK— SEE NEXT WEEK

MAGNIFIED TEN TRILLION TIMES

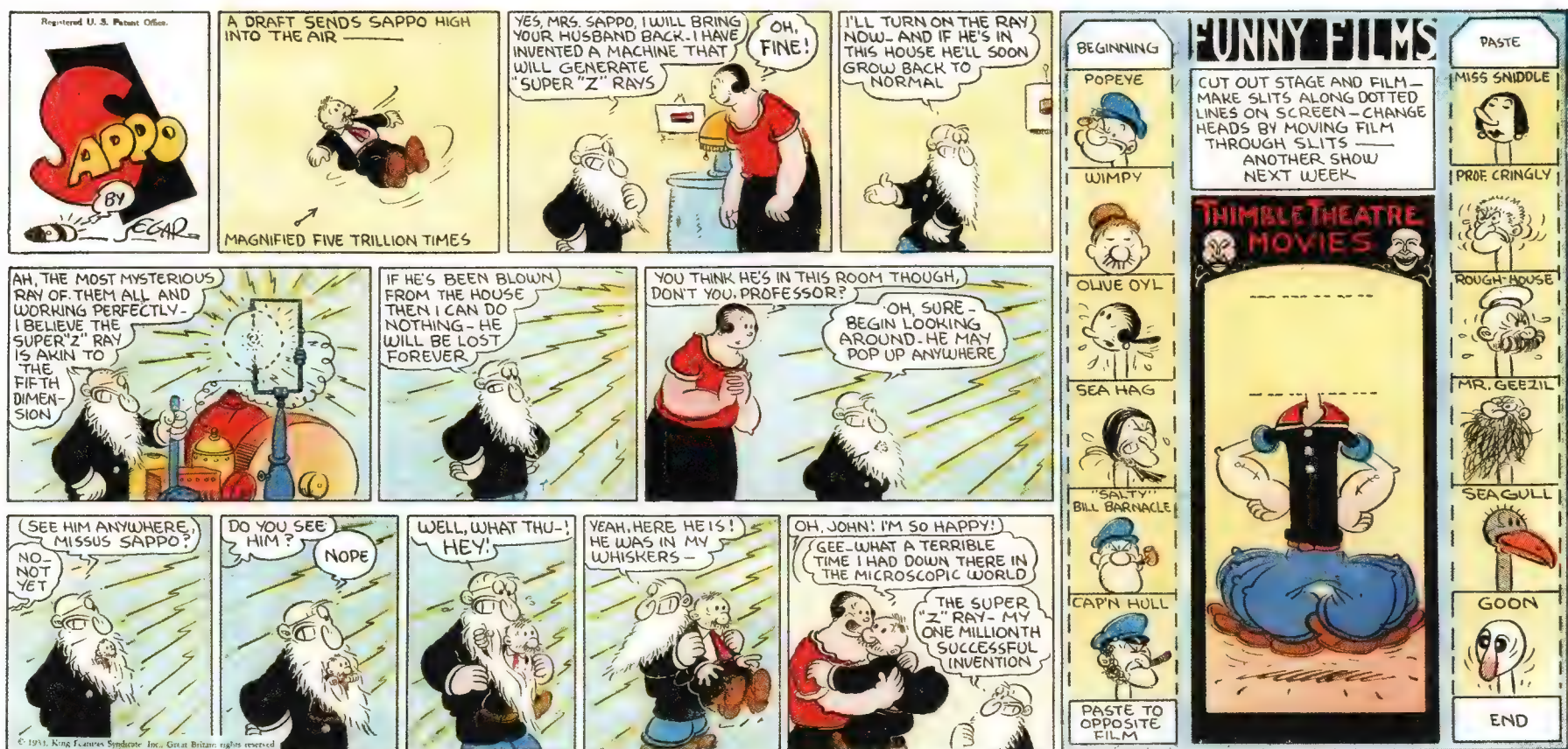
FUNNY FILMS

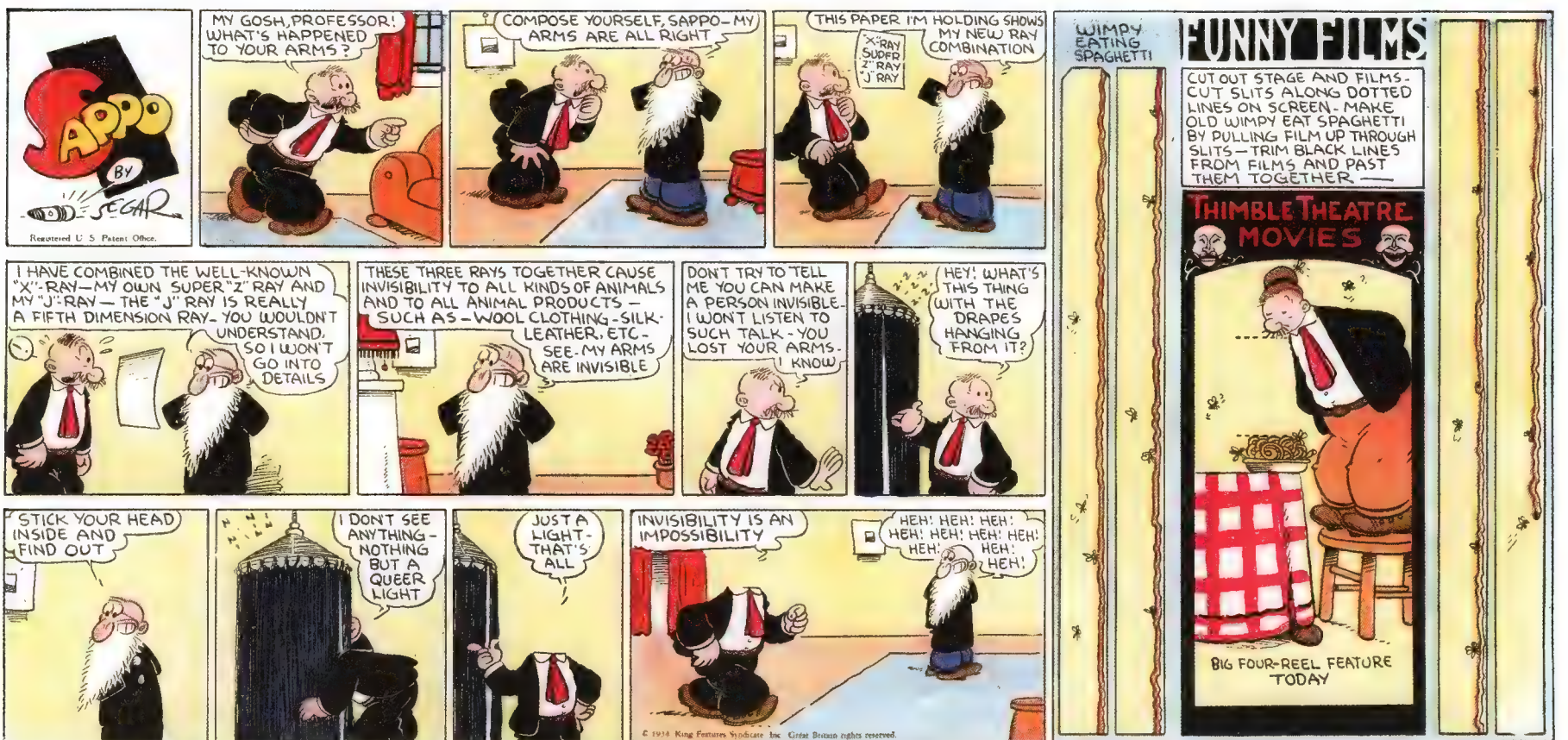
CUT OUT STAGE AND FILM MAKE SLITS ALONG DOTTED LINES ON SCREEN— CHANGE EYES BY MOVING FILM THROUGH SLITS ANOTHER SHOW NEXT WEEK

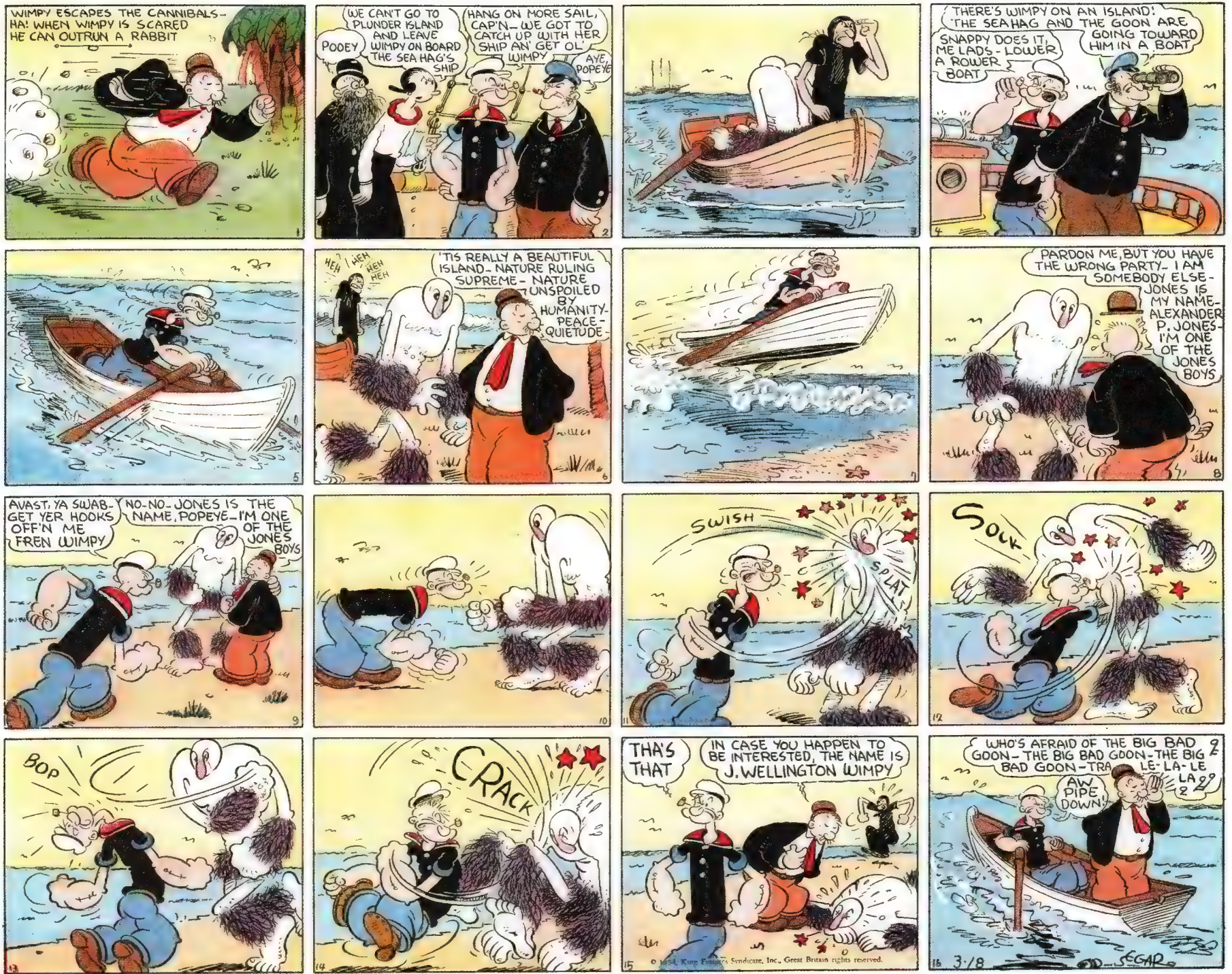
THIMBLE THEATRE MOVIES

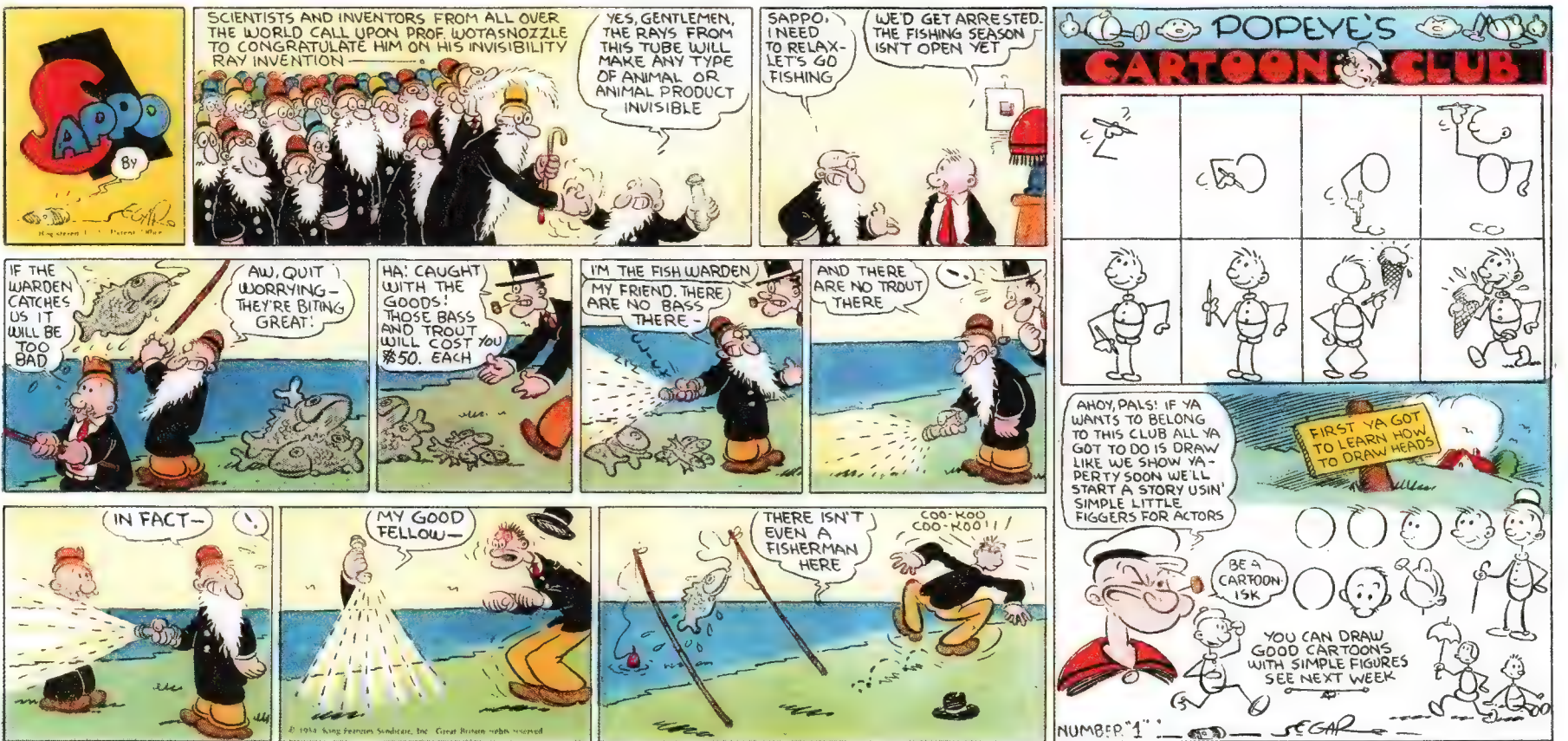
PASTE TO OPPOSITE FILM

END

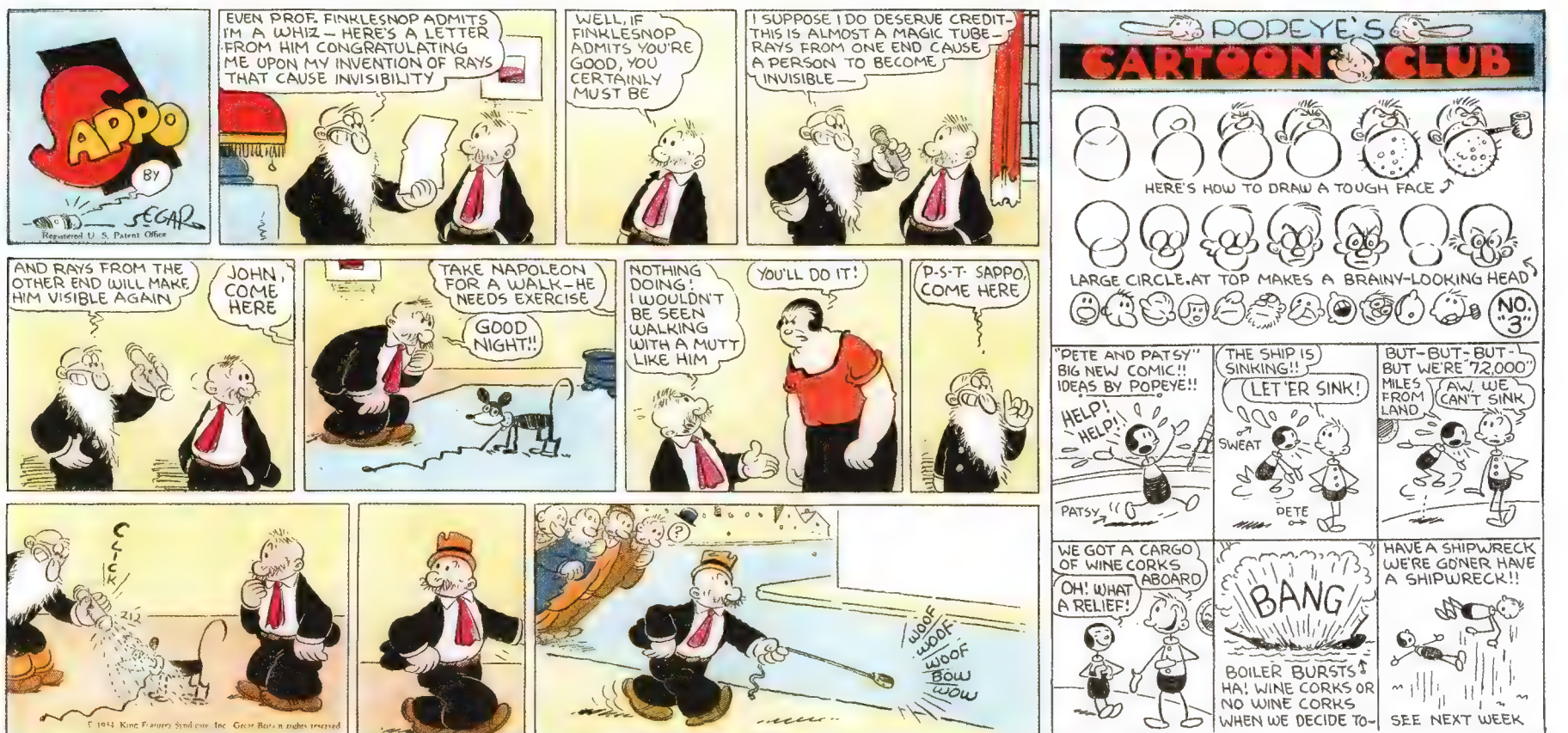


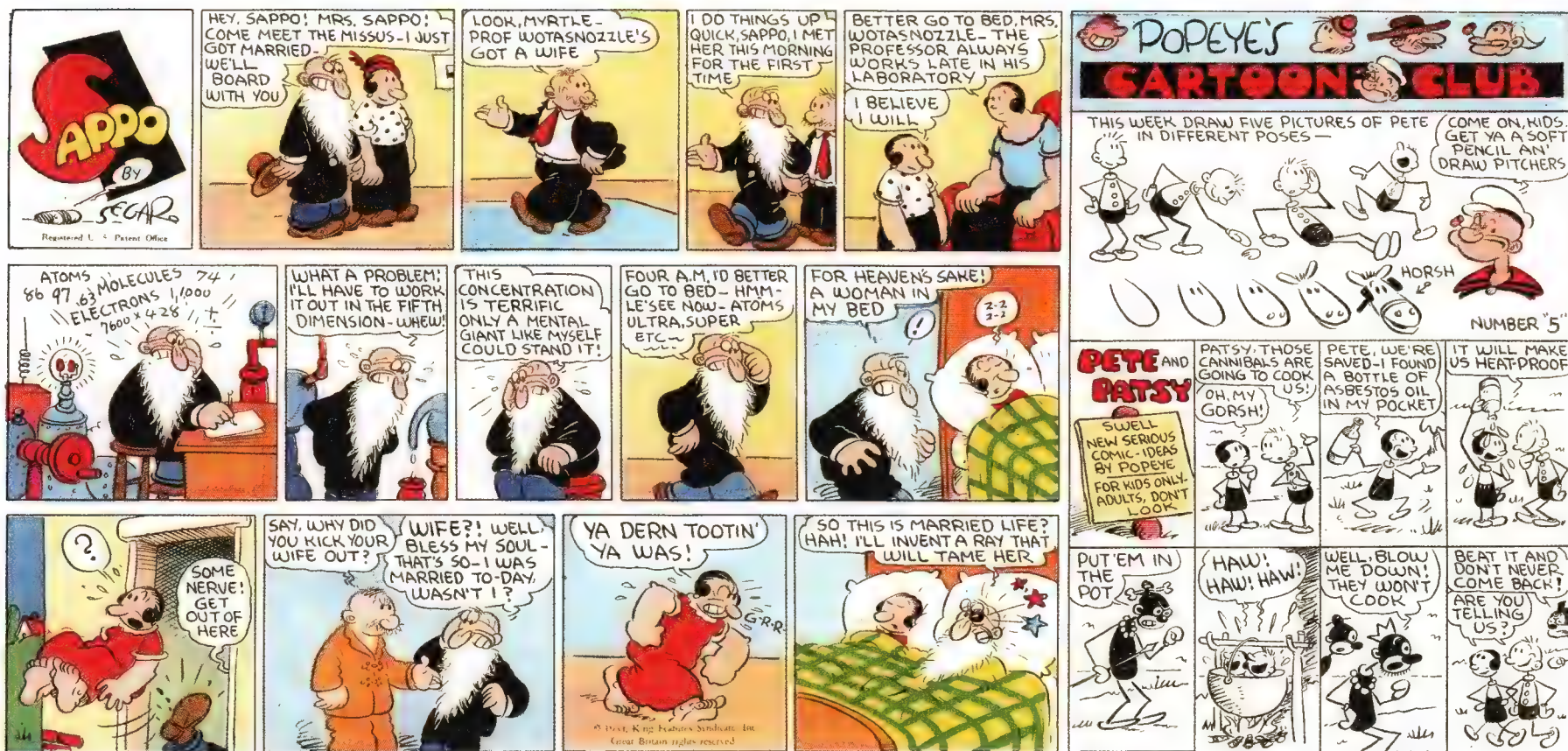


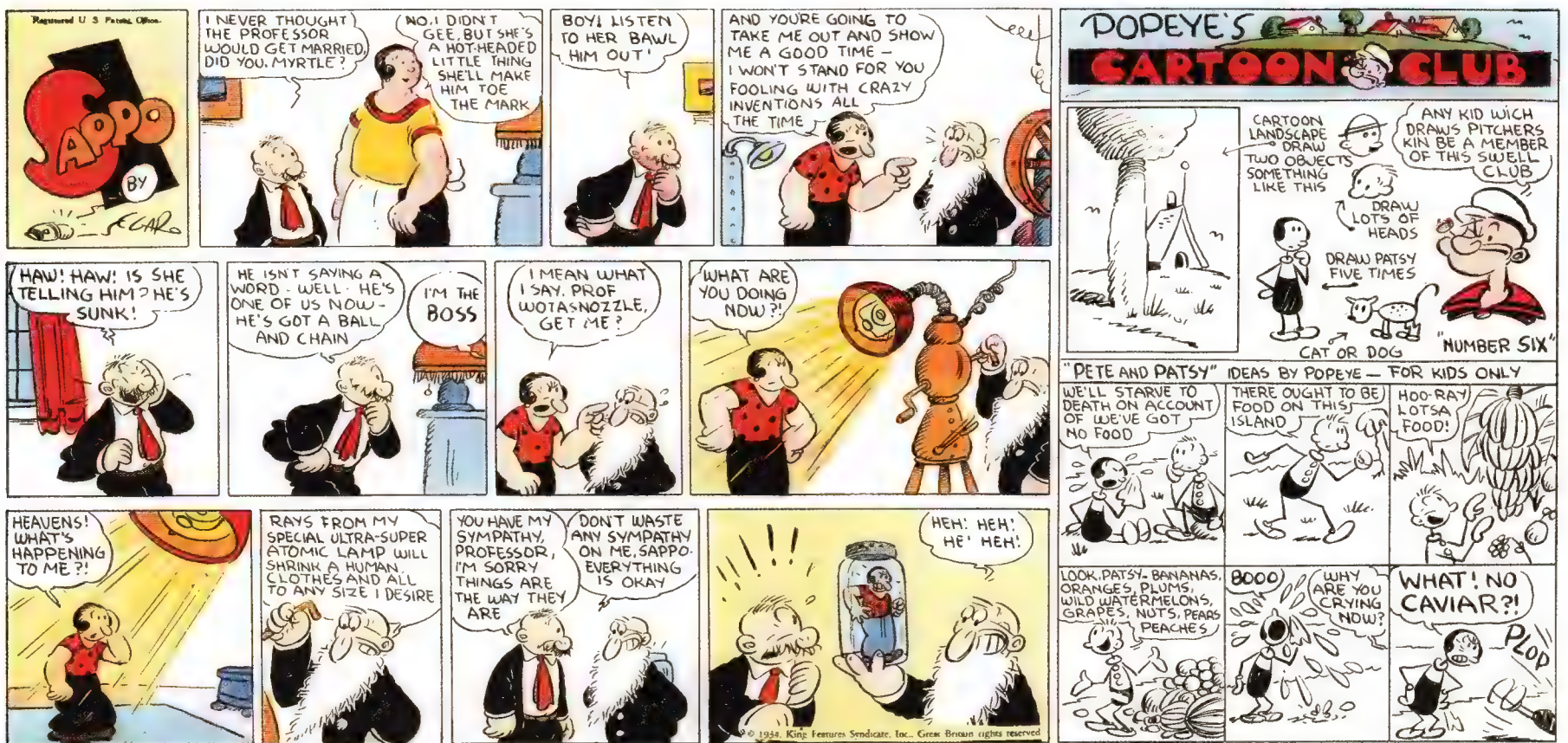


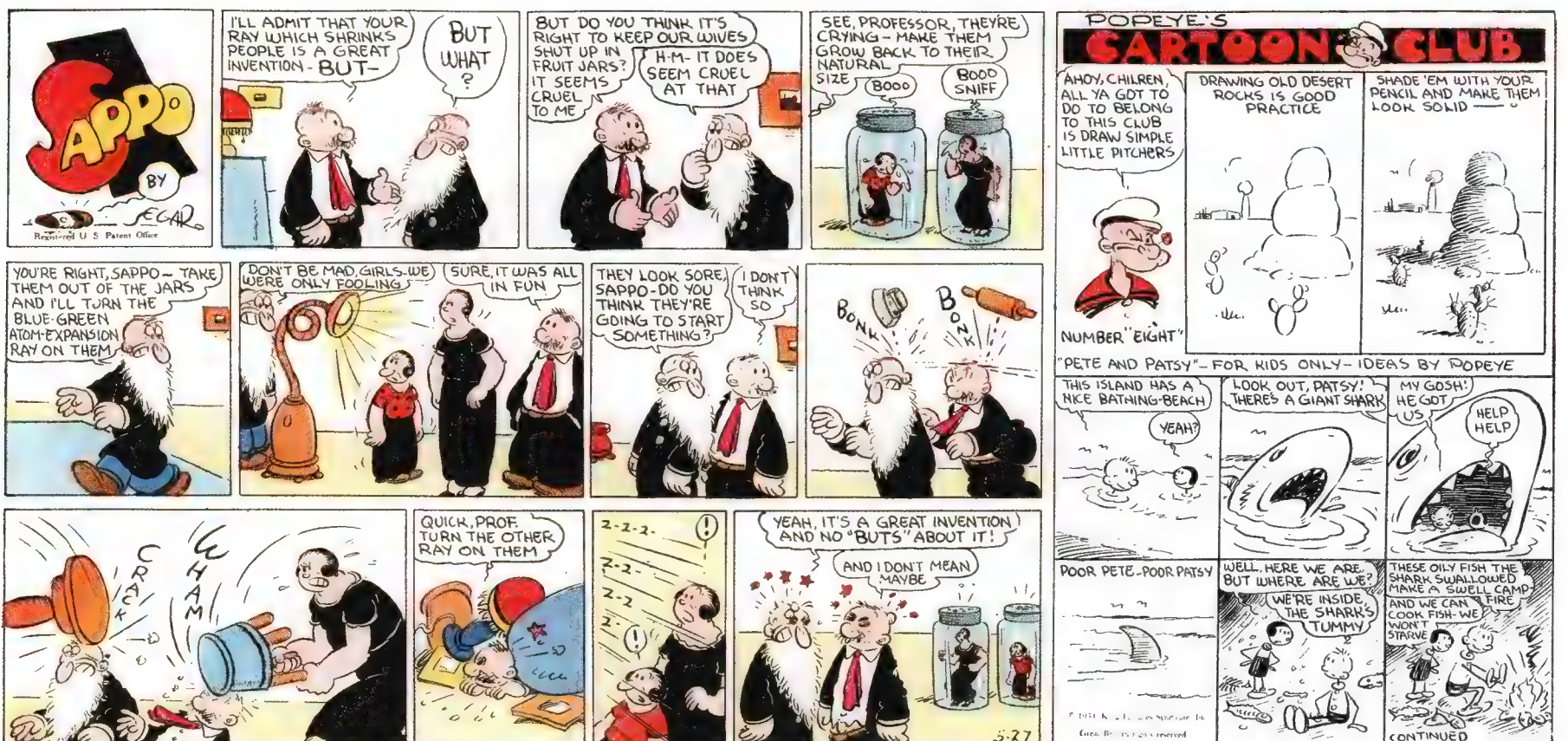


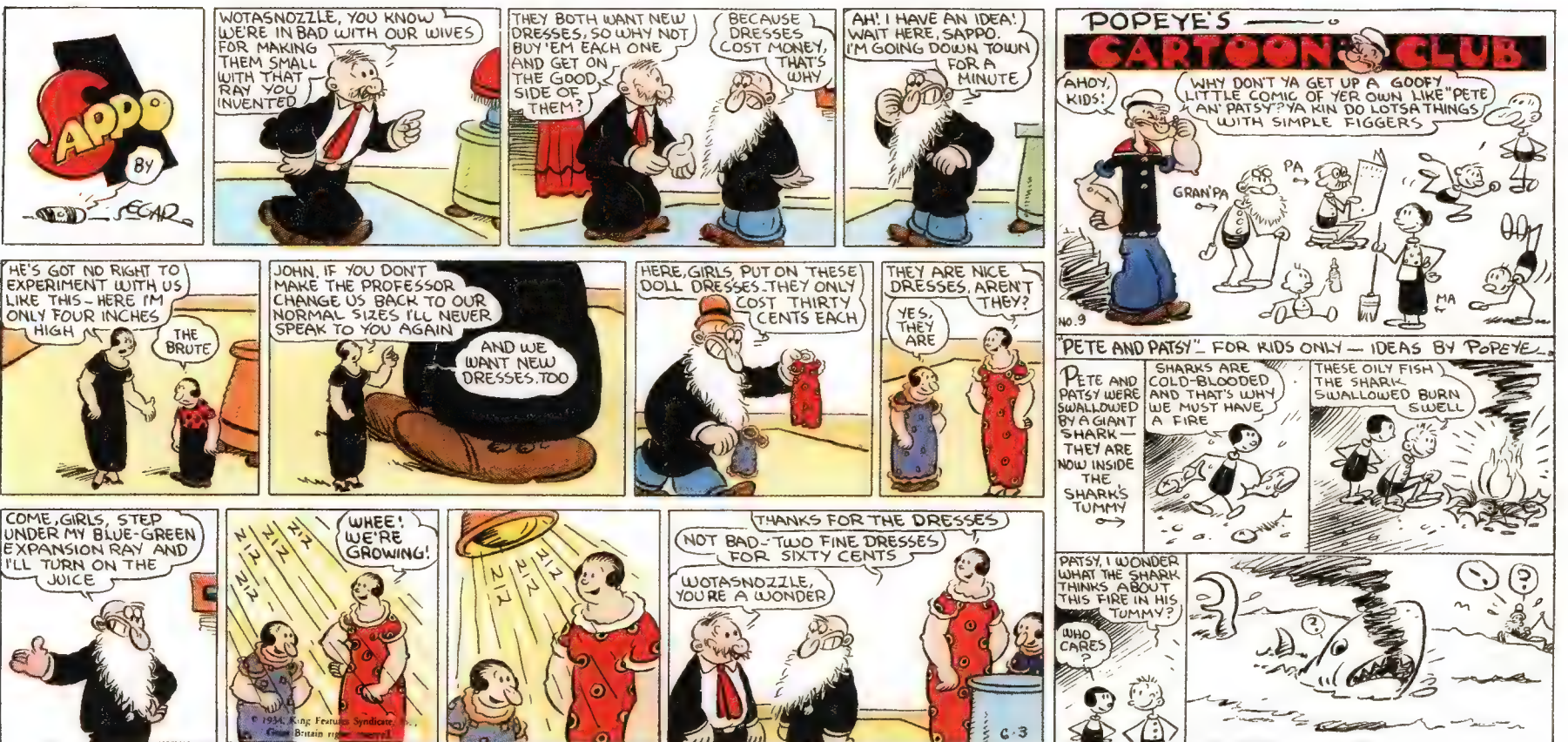


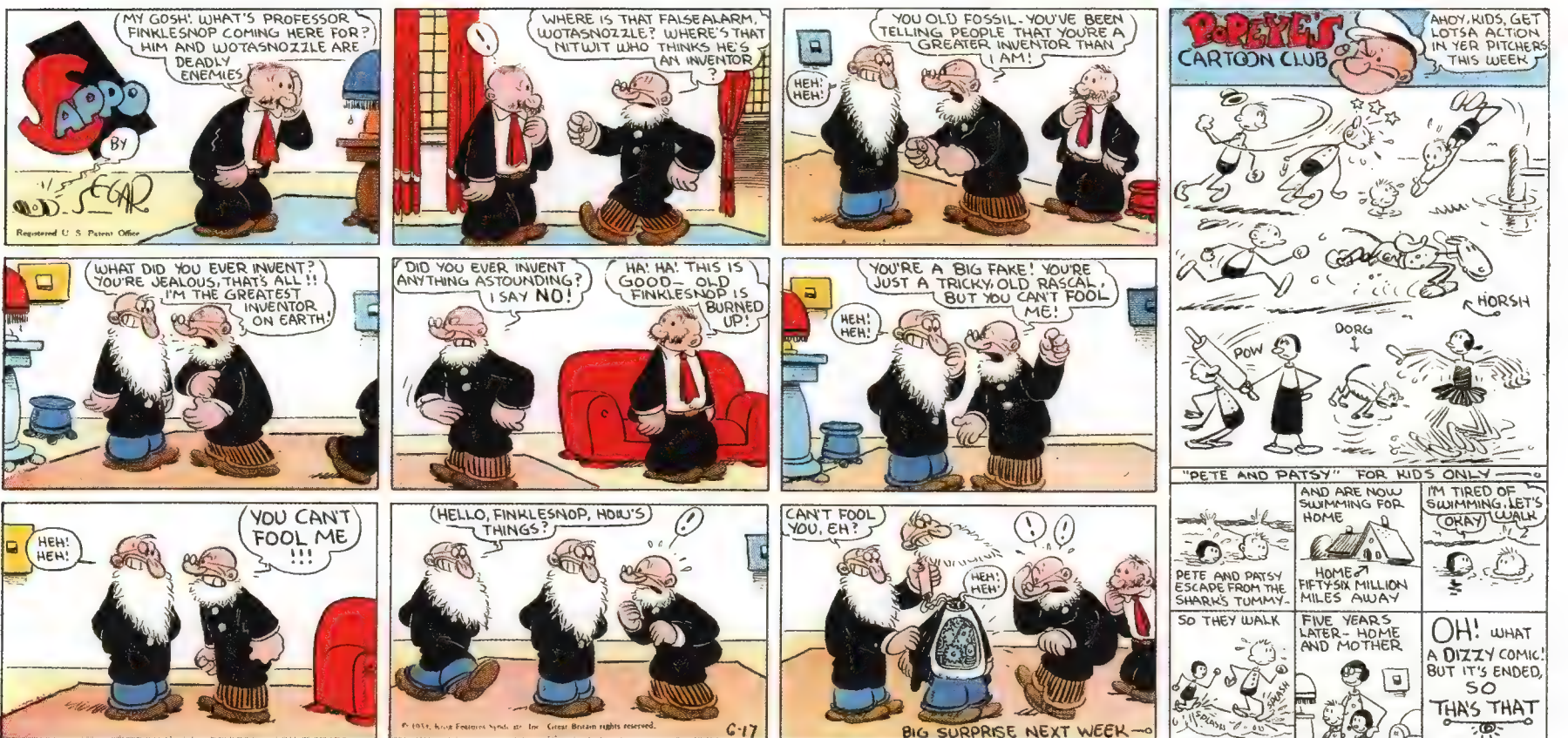


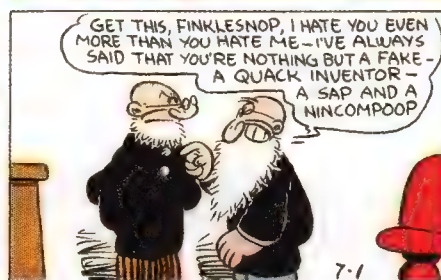
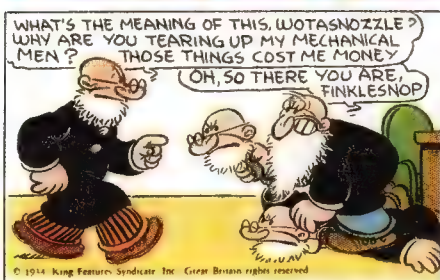
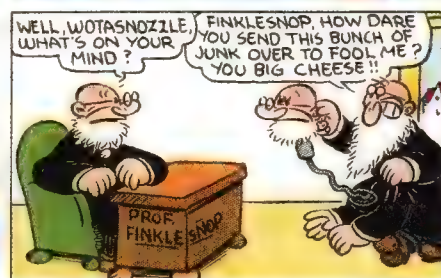
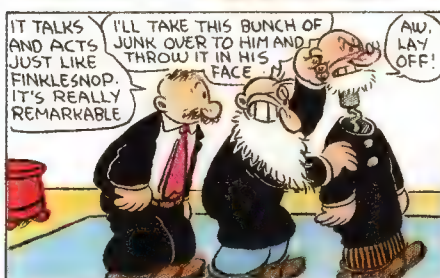
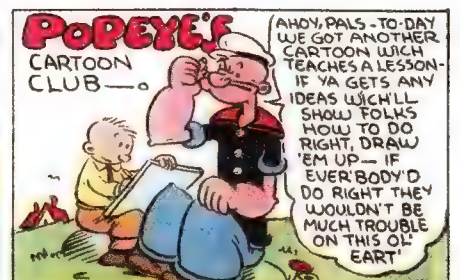
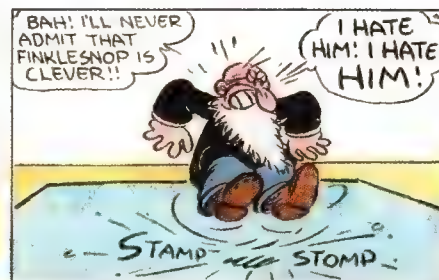
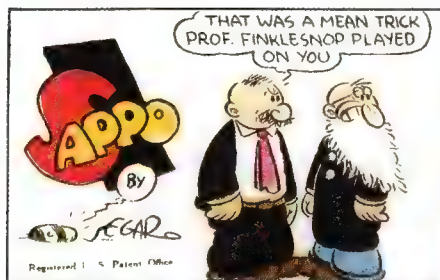
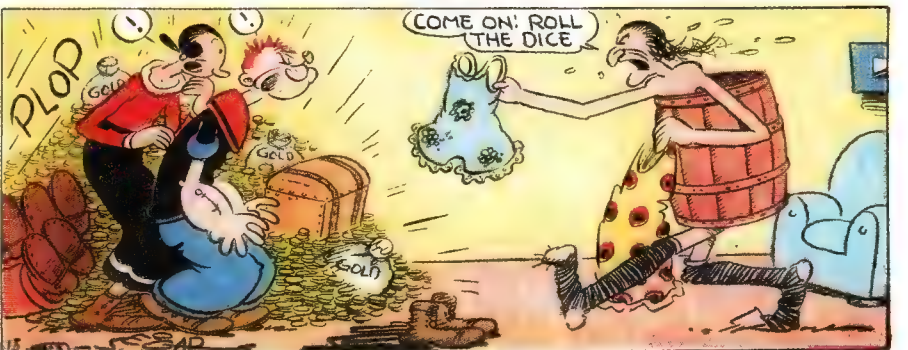
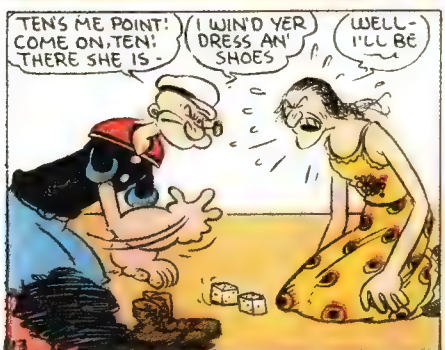
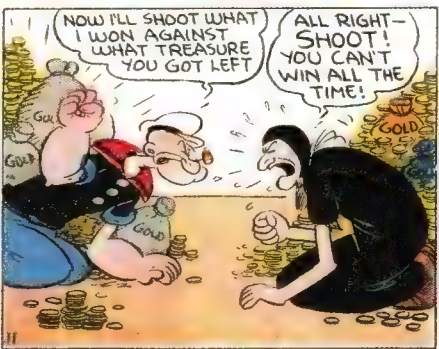
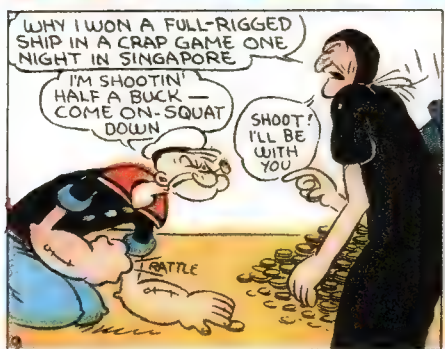
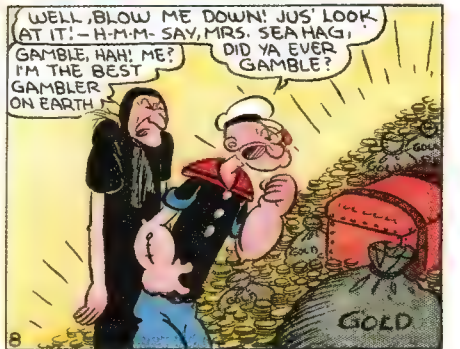
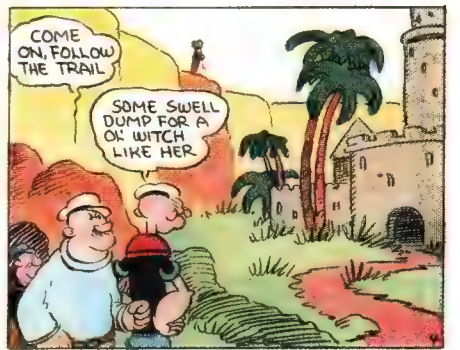
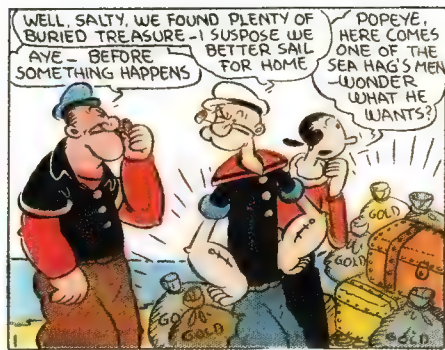


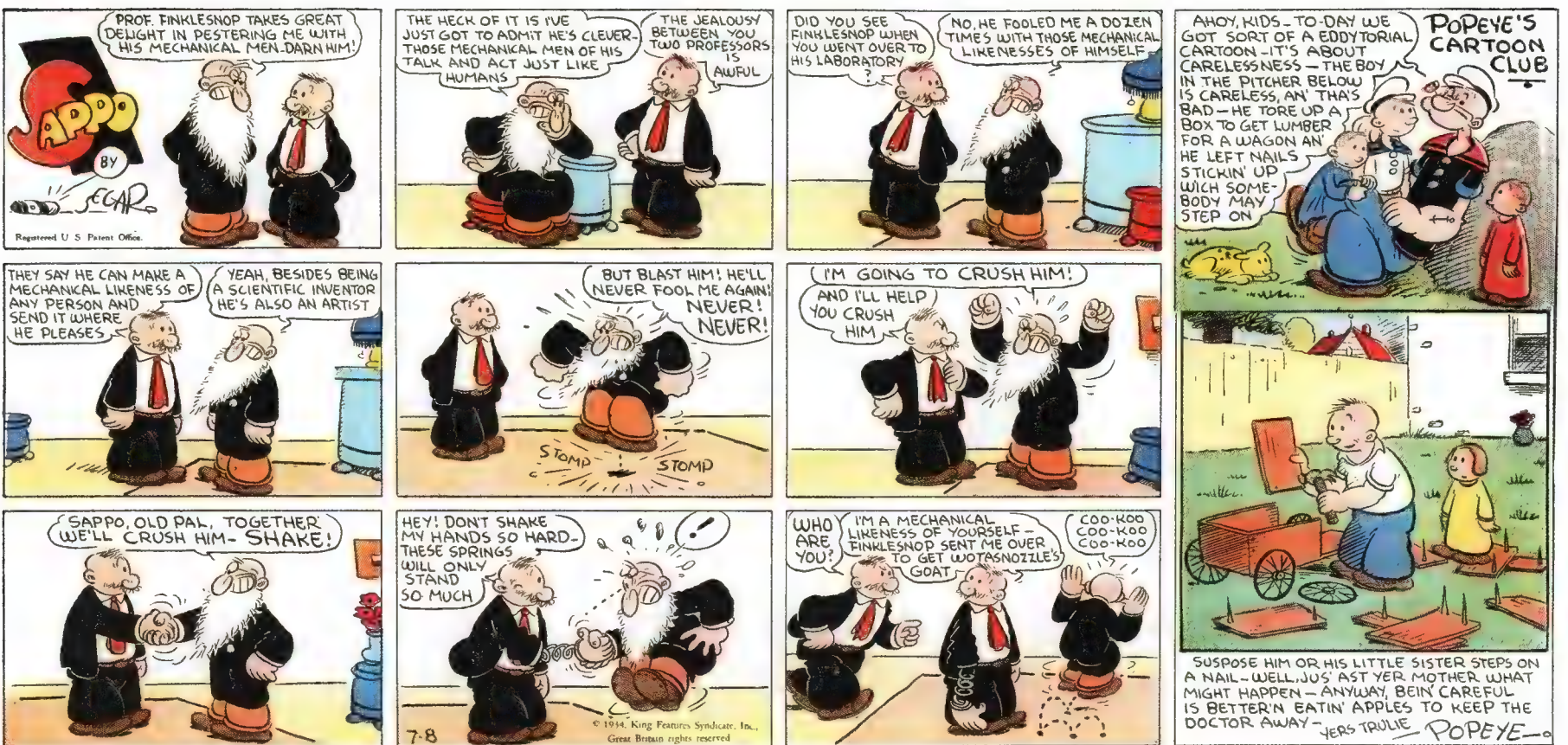
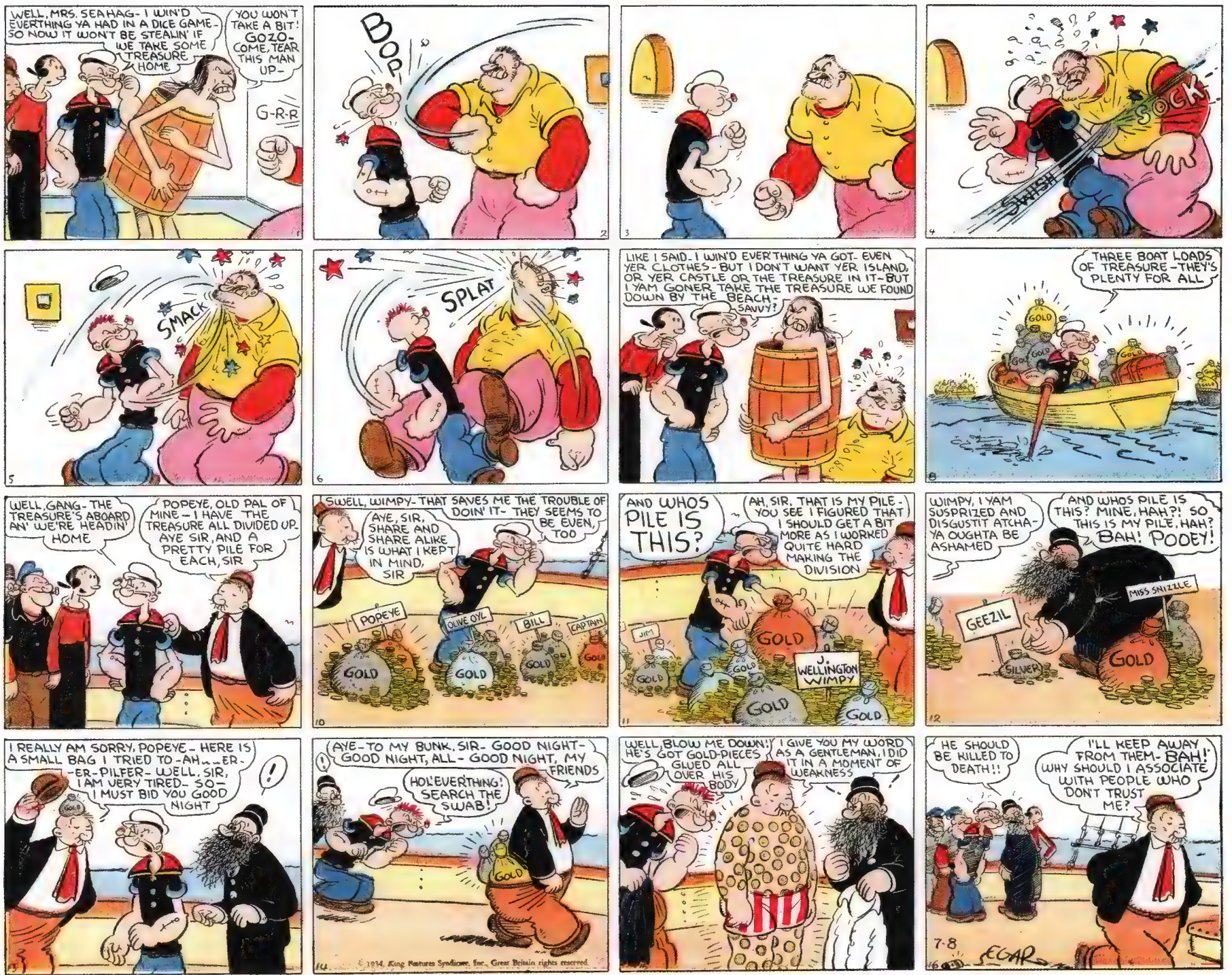


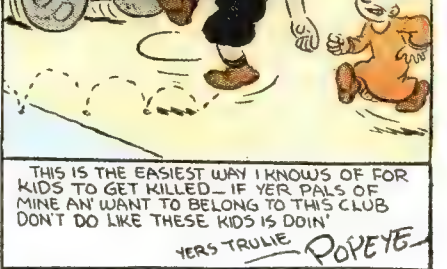
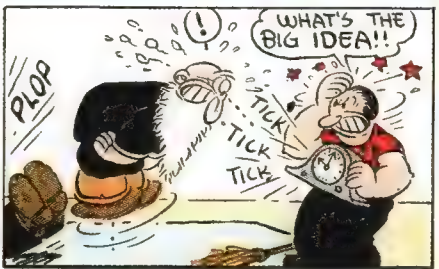
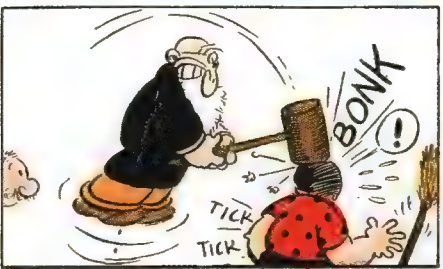
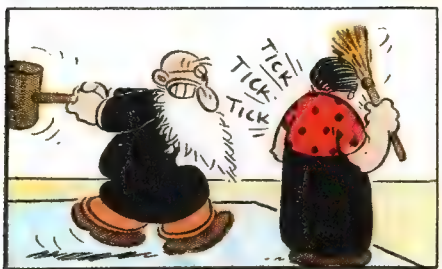
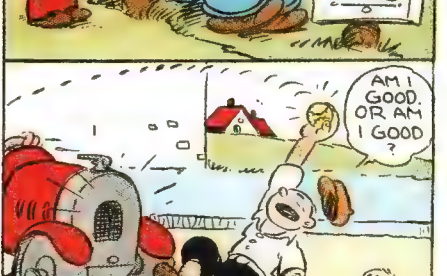
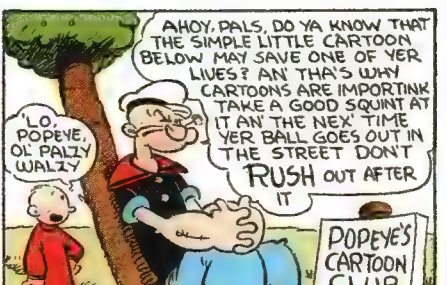
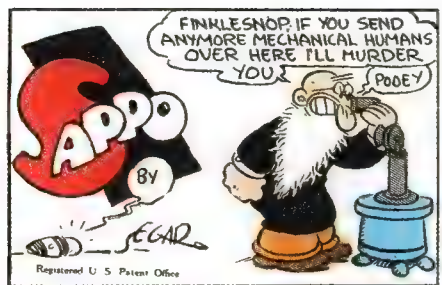
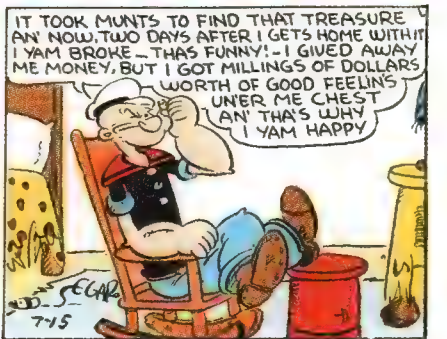
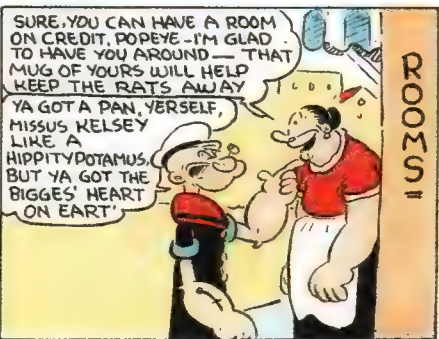
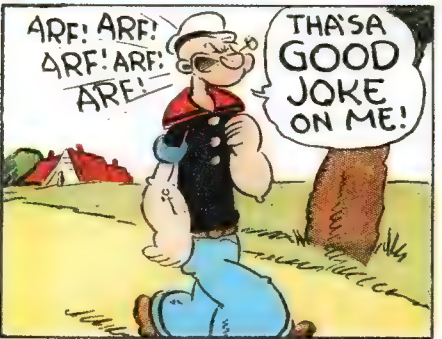
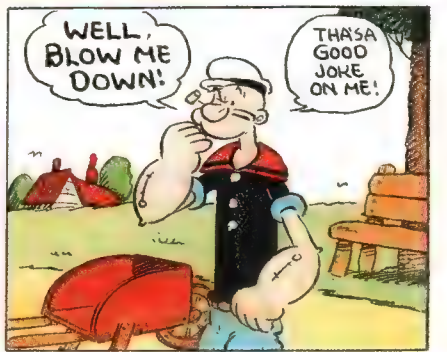
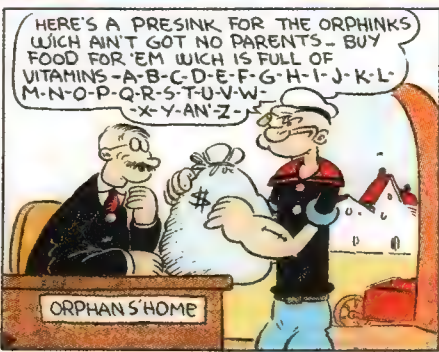
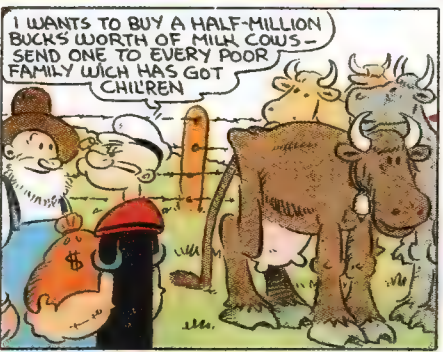
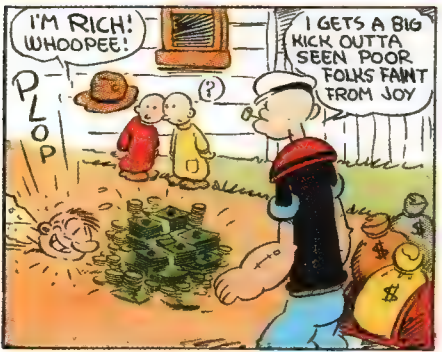
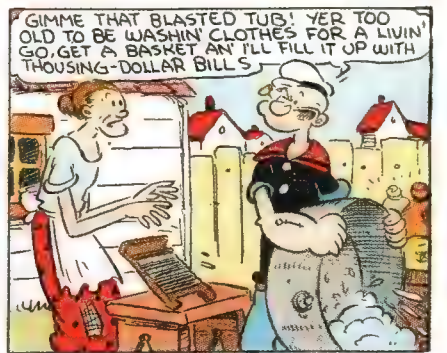
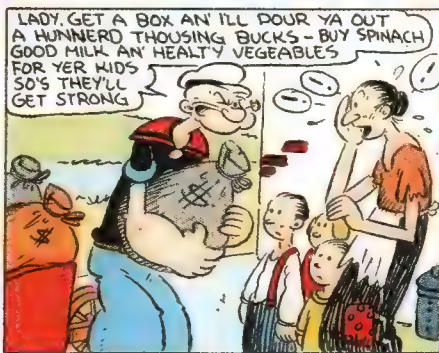
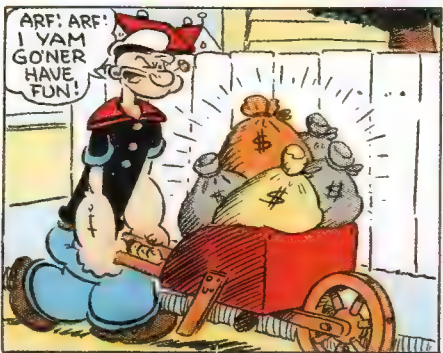
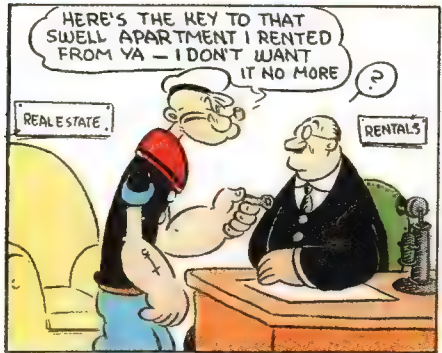
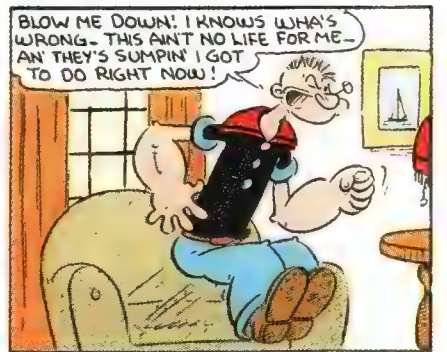
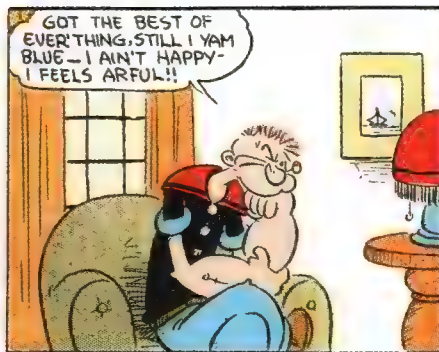
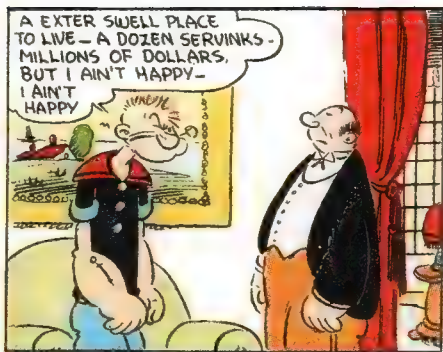
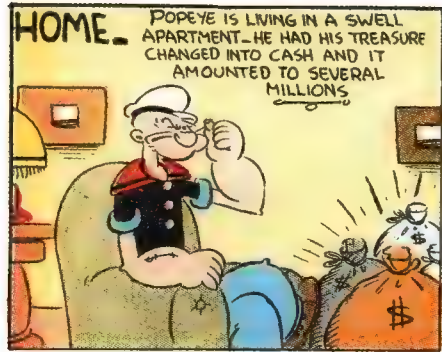




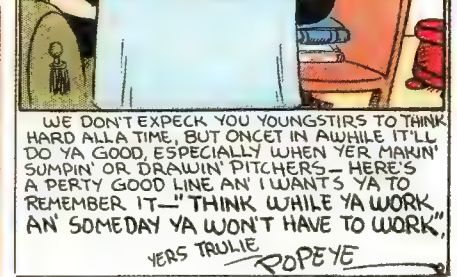
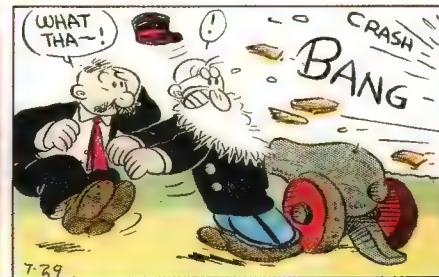
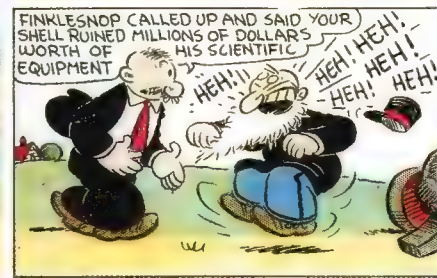
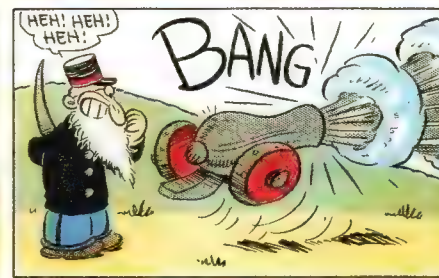
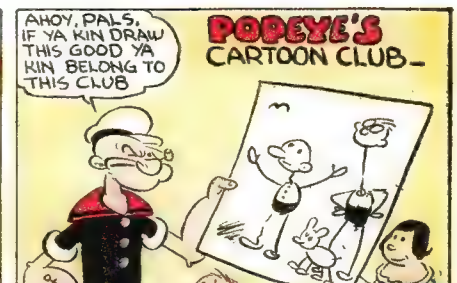
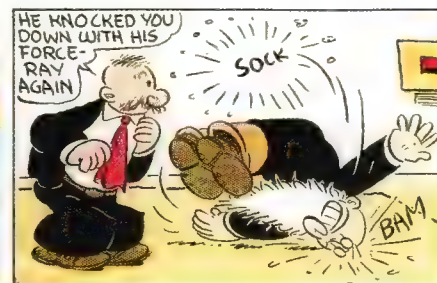
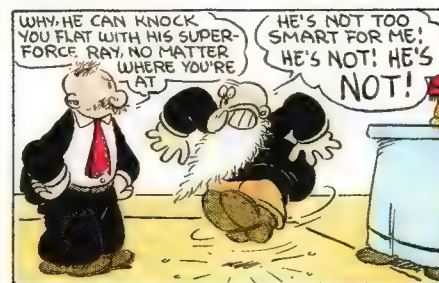
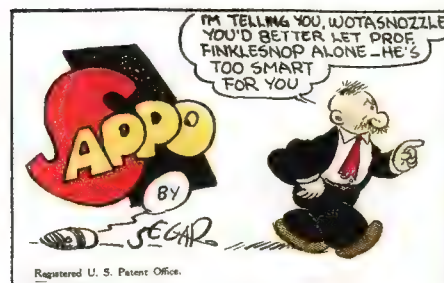
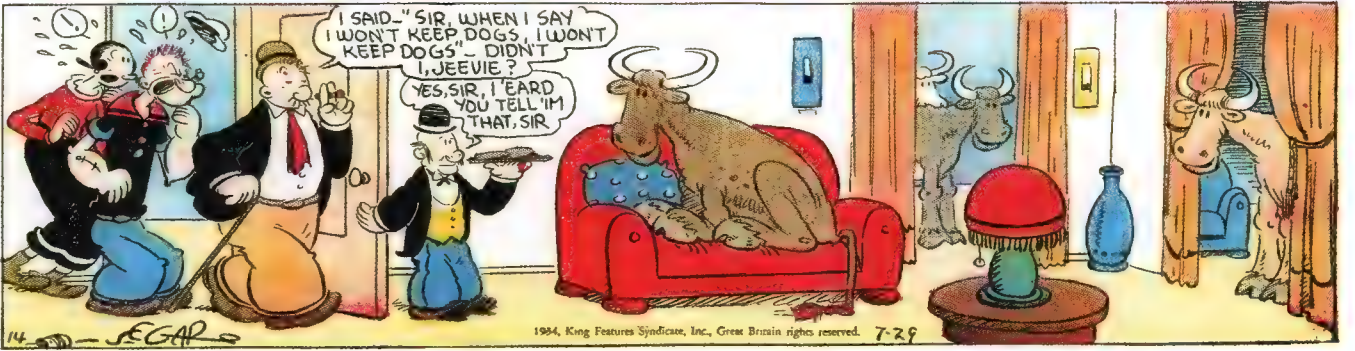
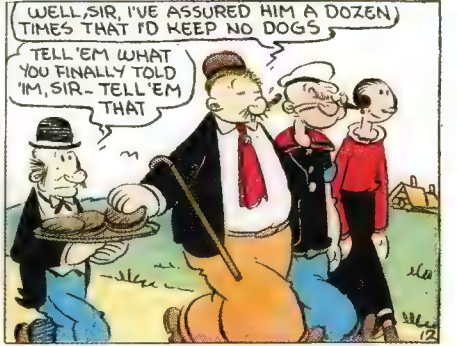
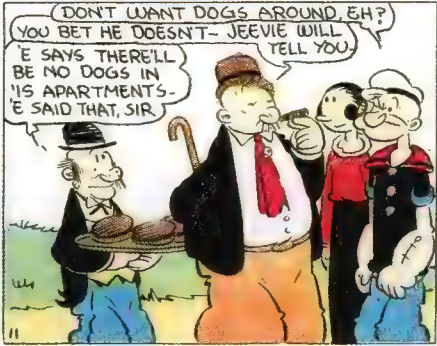
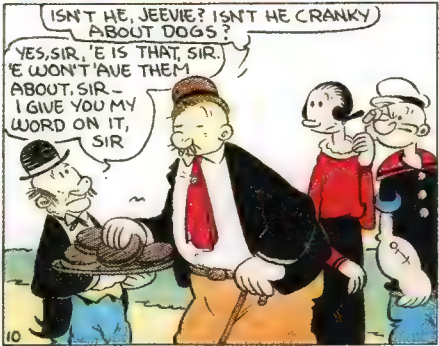
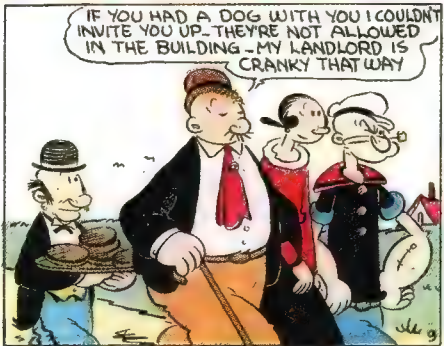
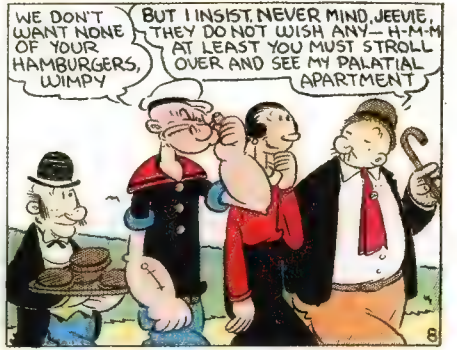
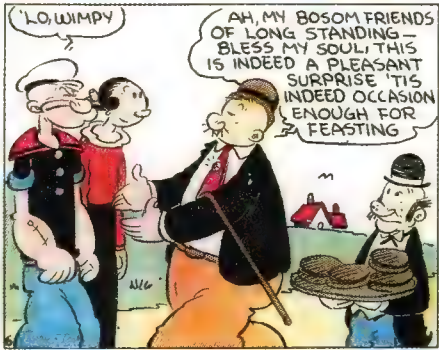
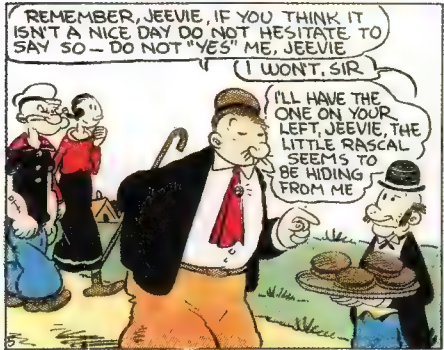
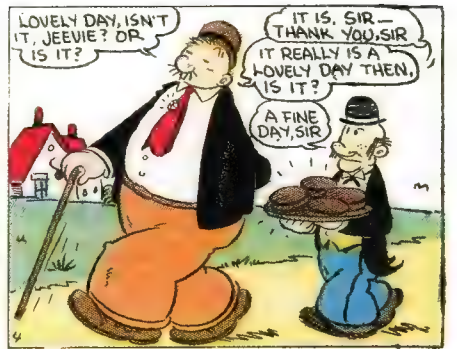
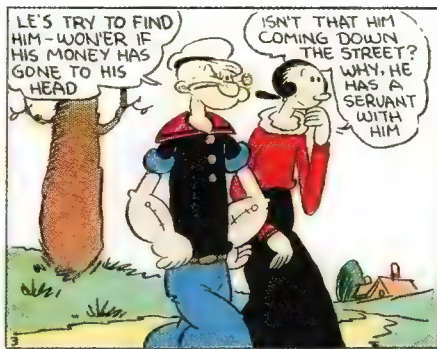
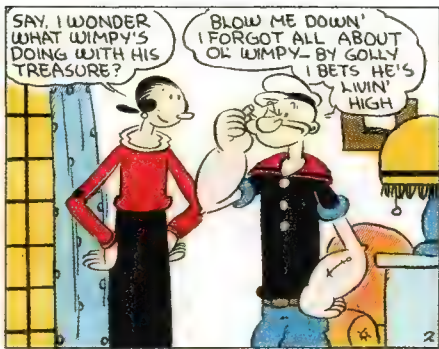


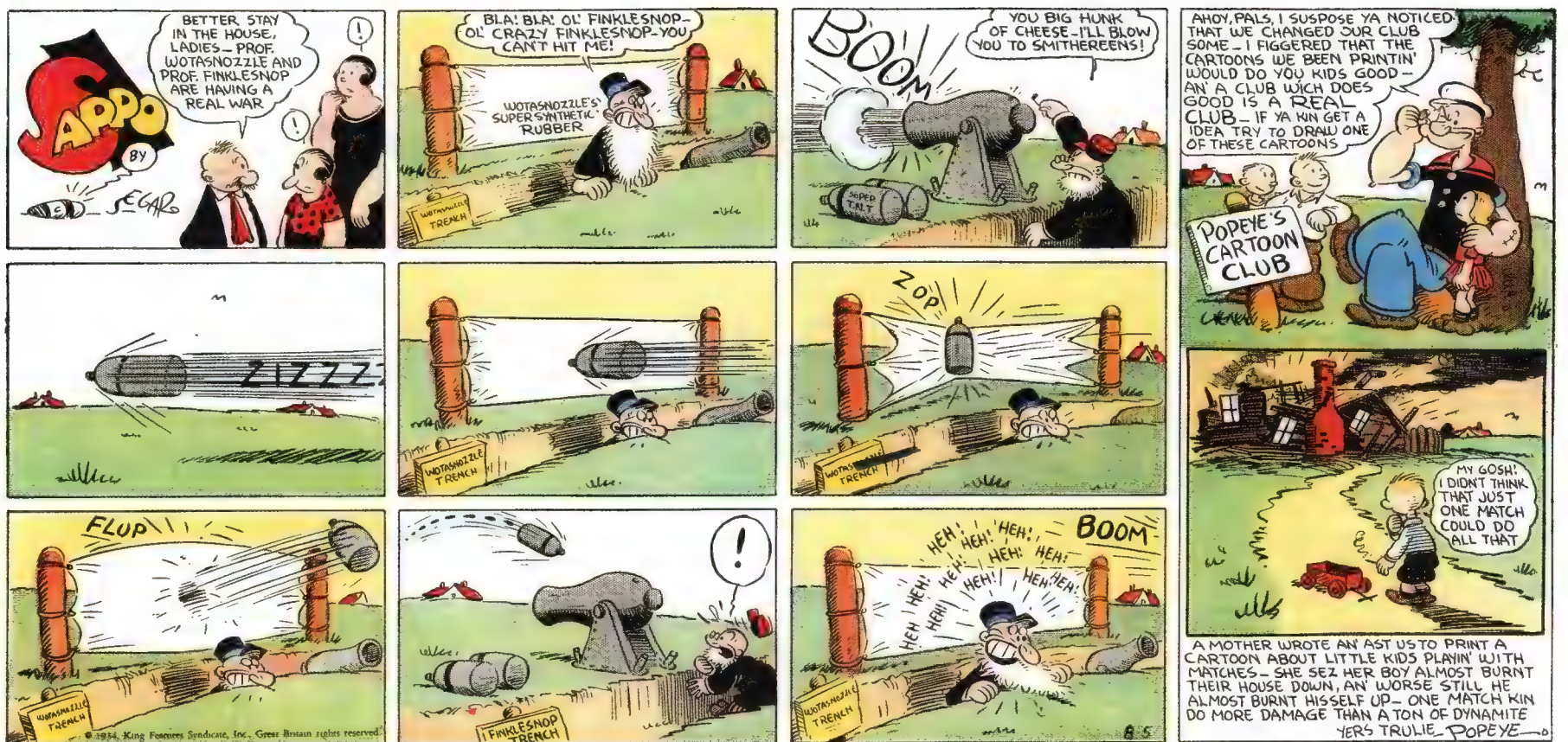


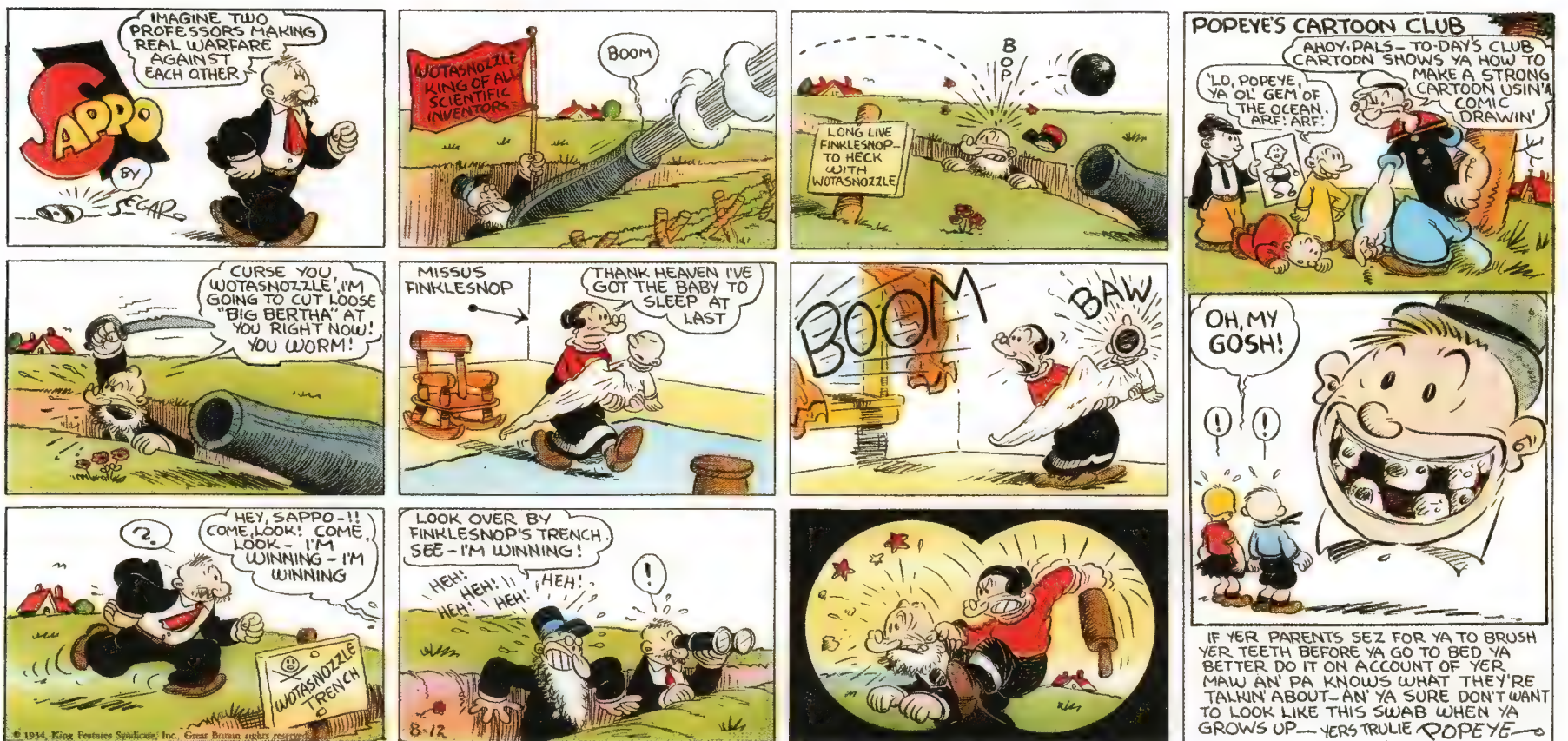
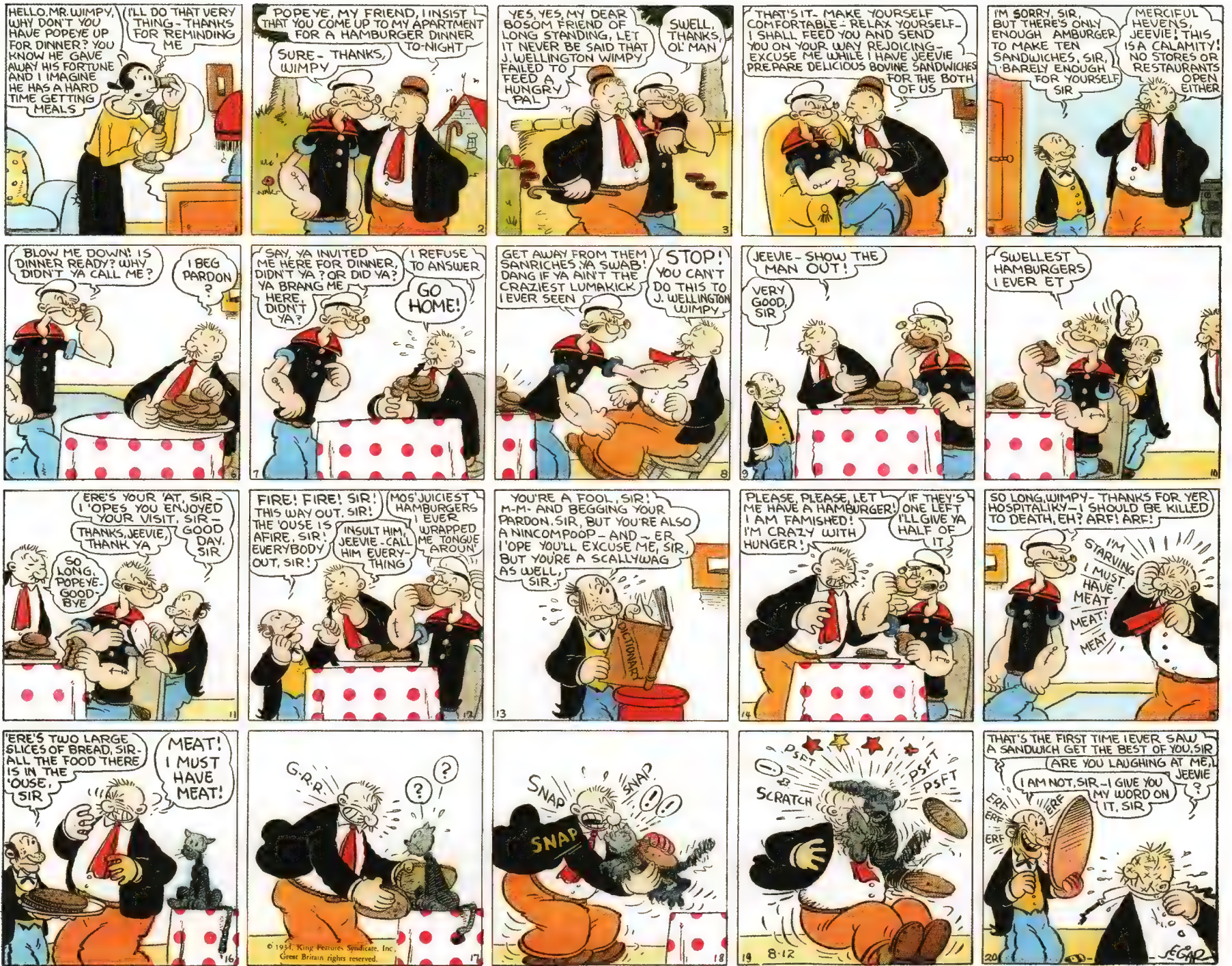


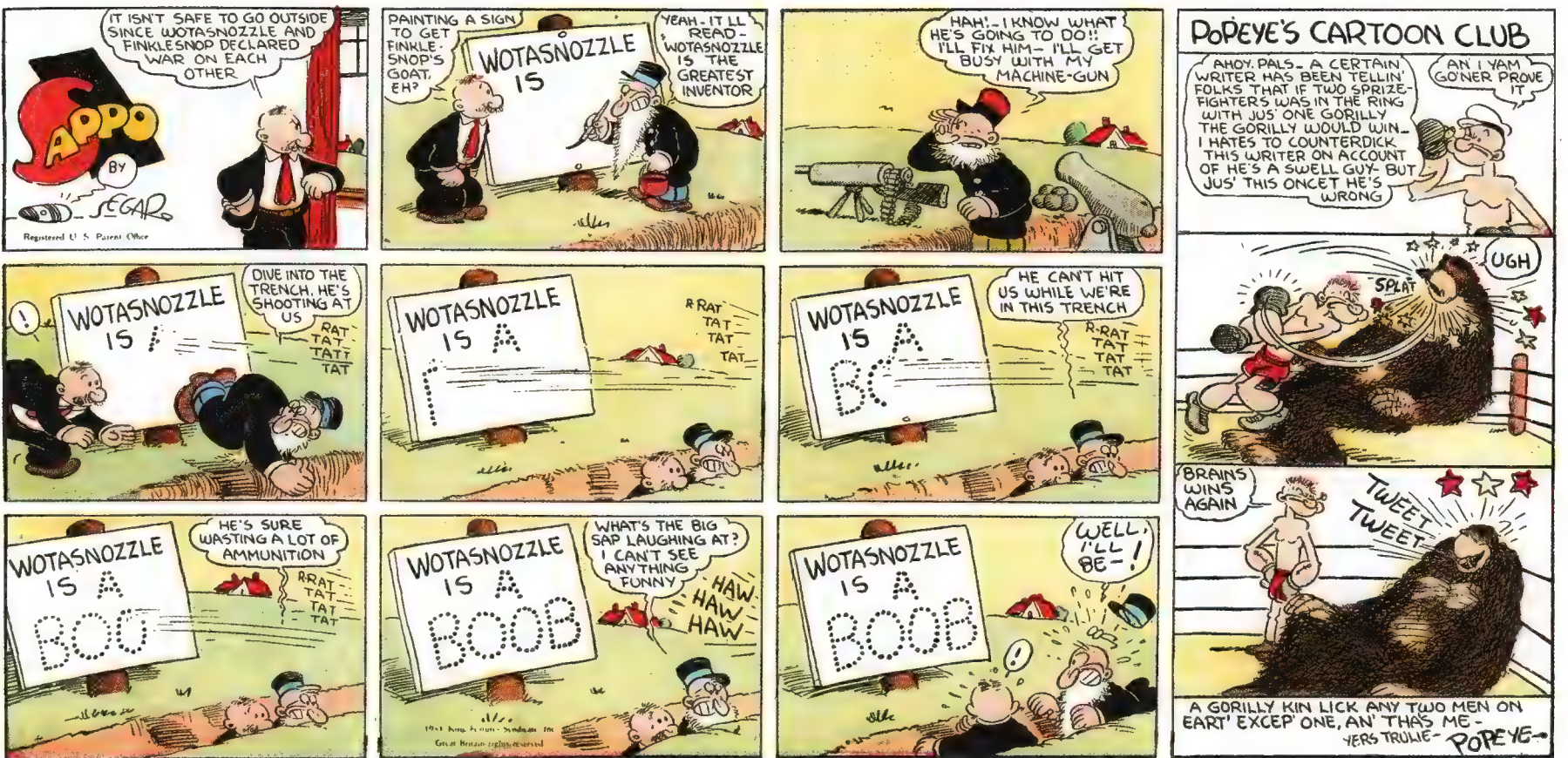
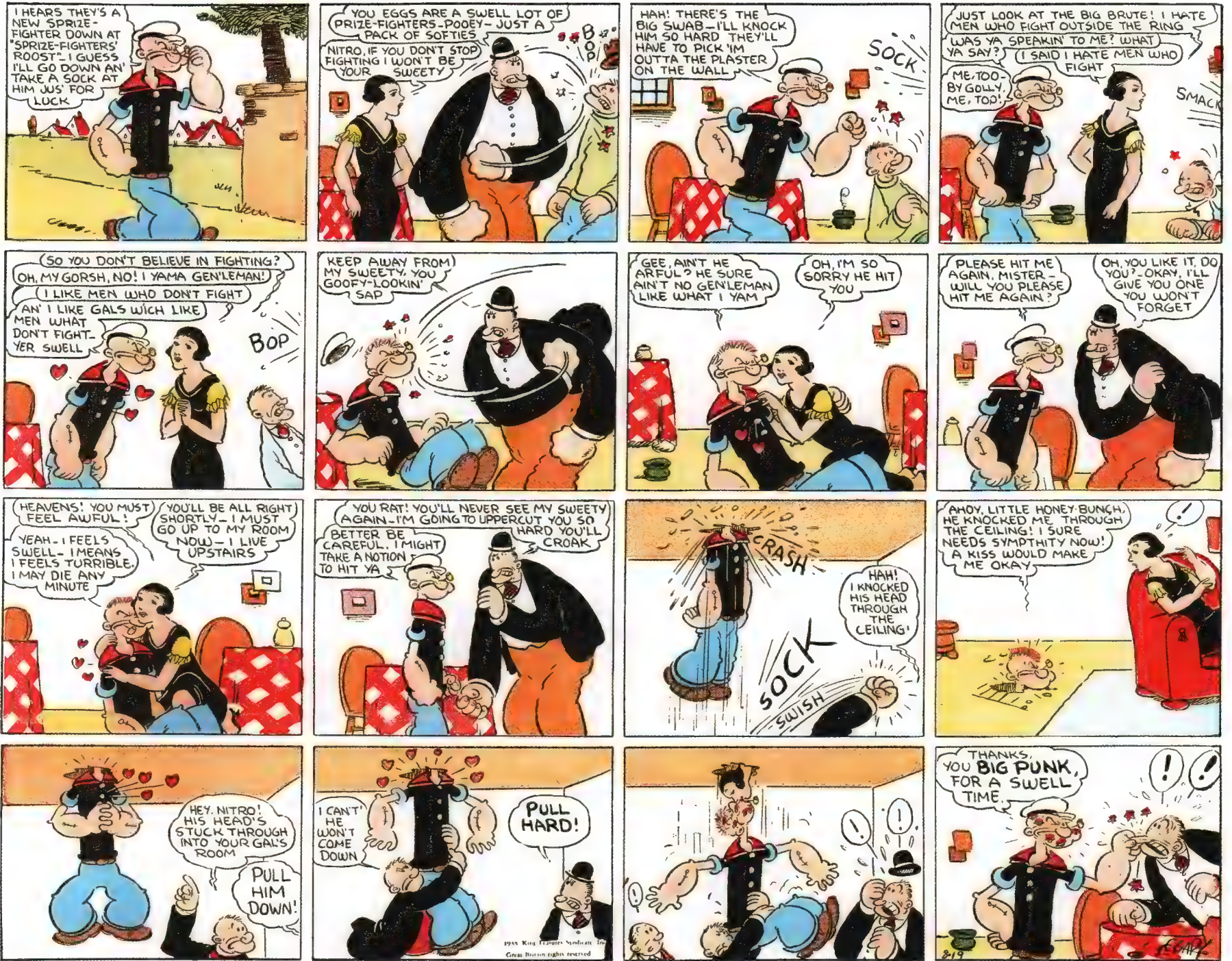


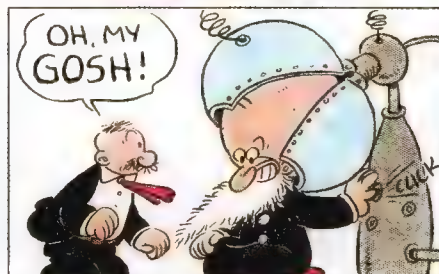
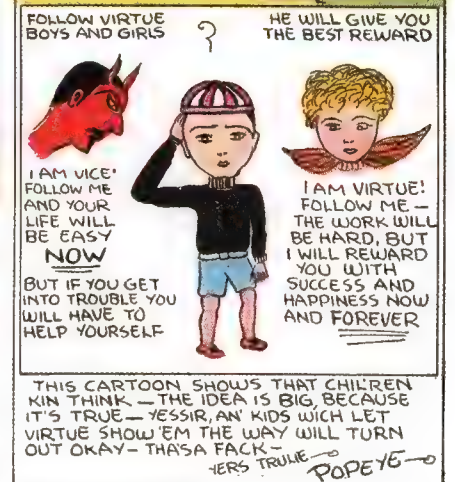
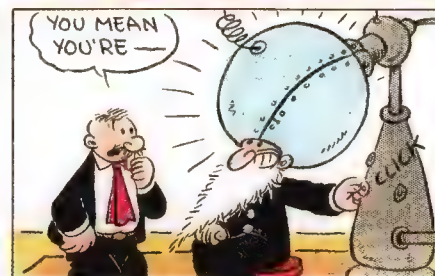
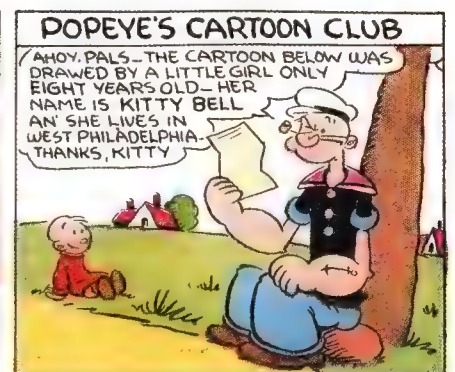
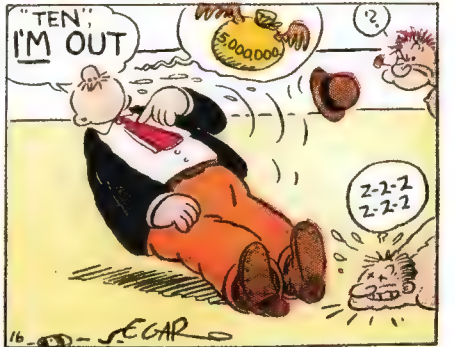
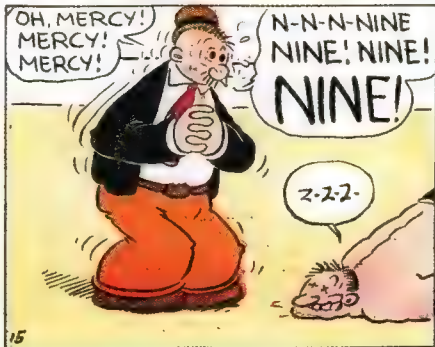
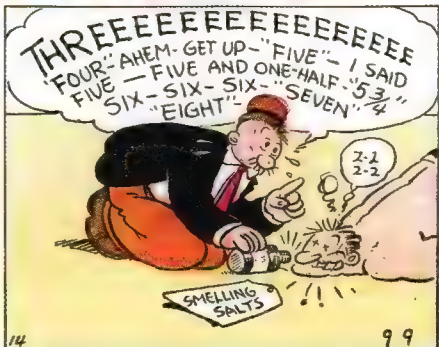
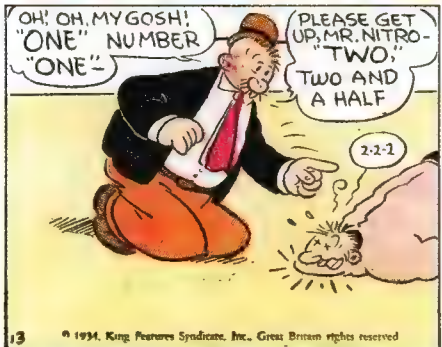
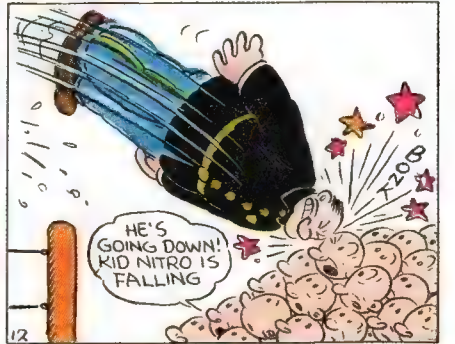
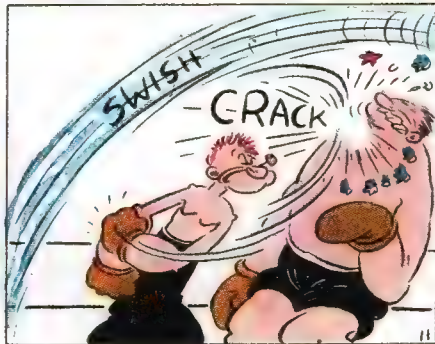
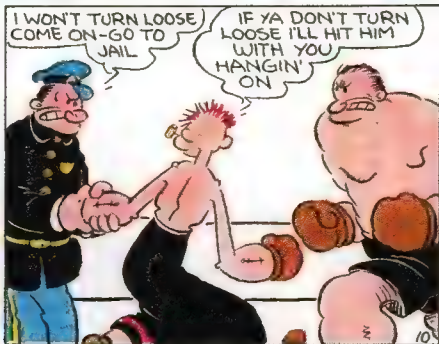
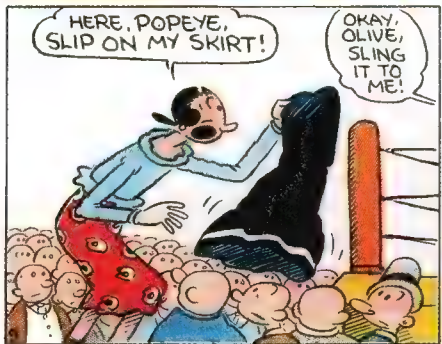
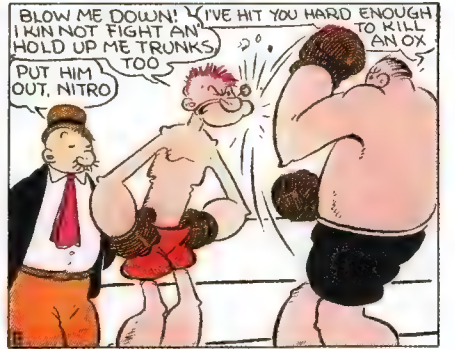
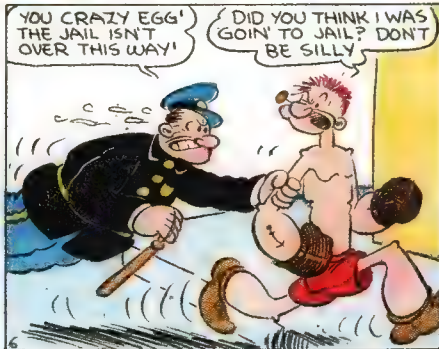
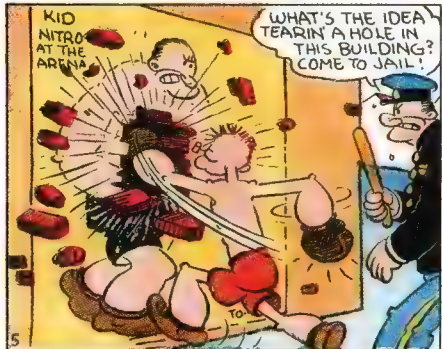
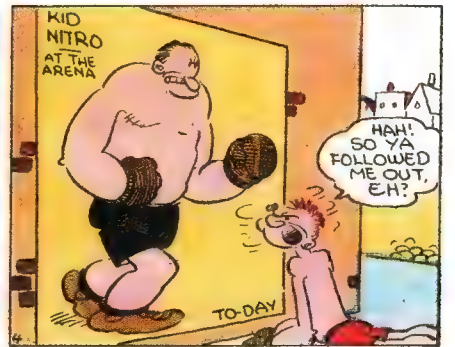
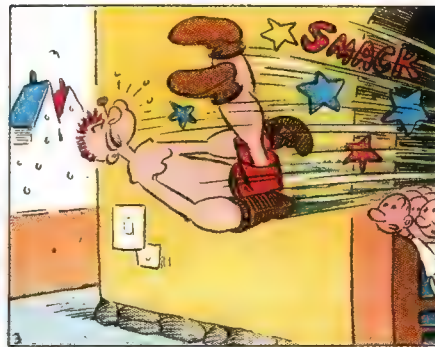
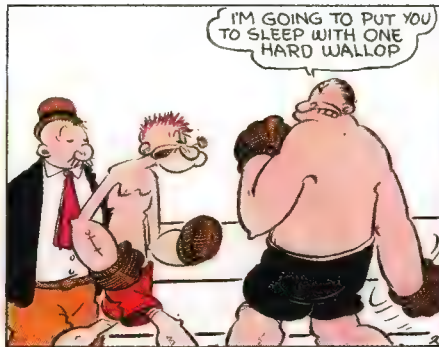
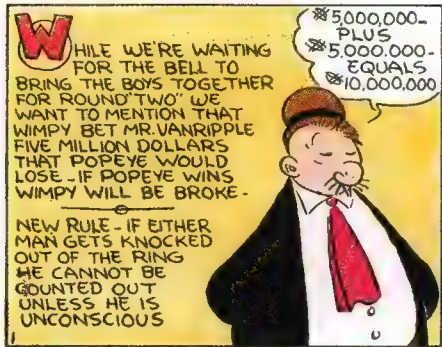




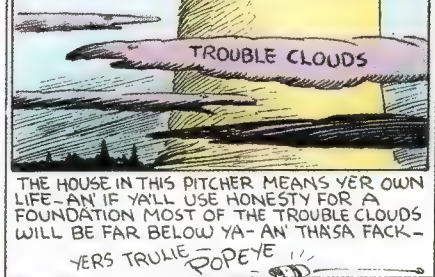
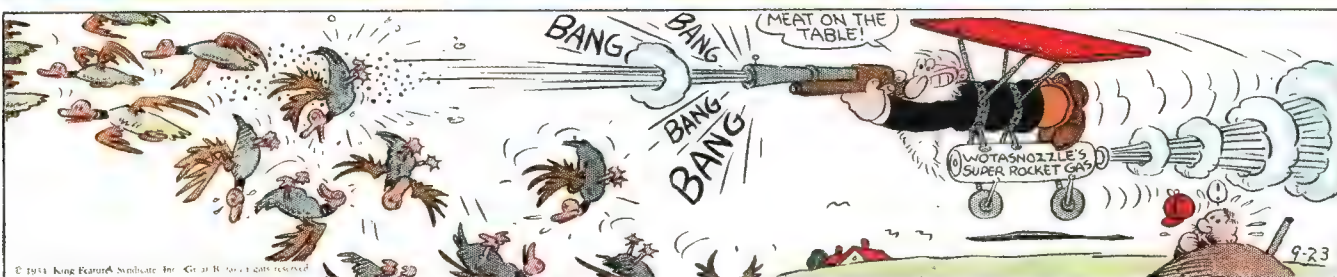
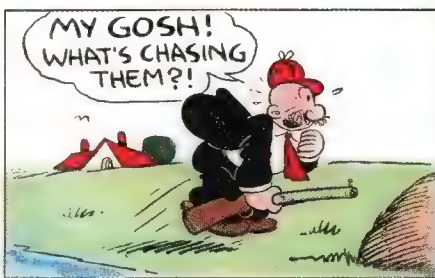
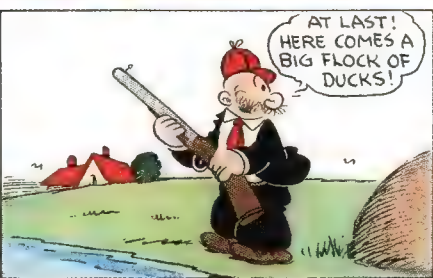
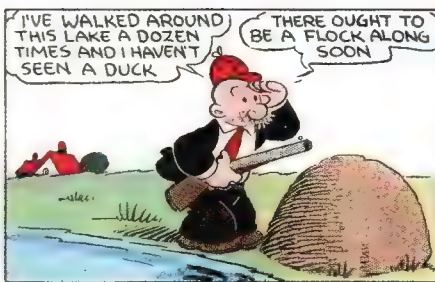
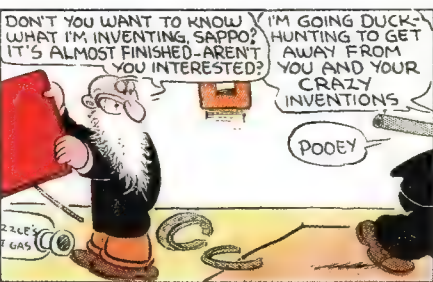
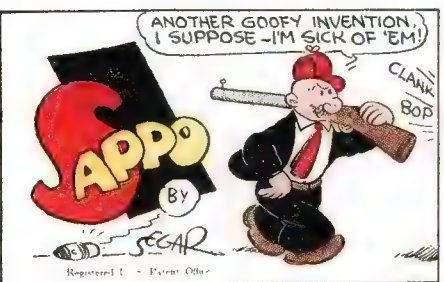
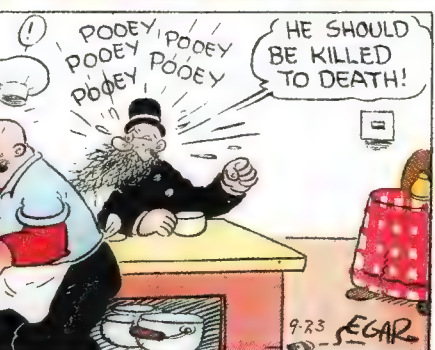
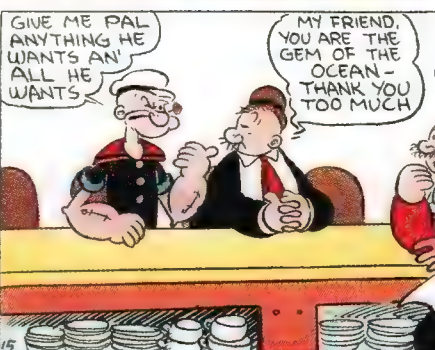
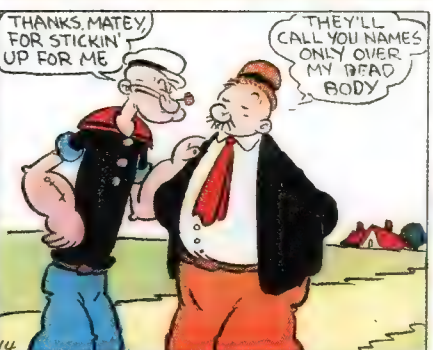
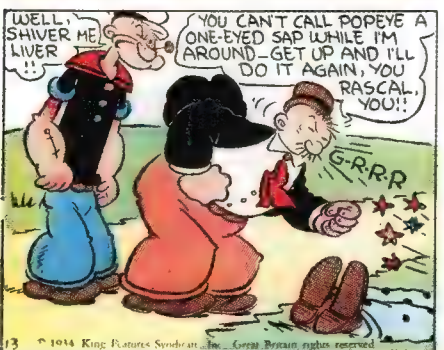
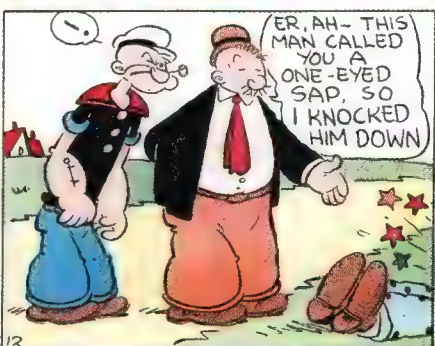
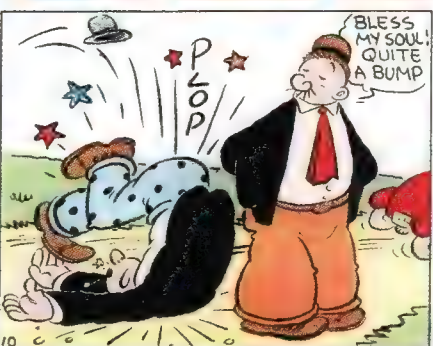
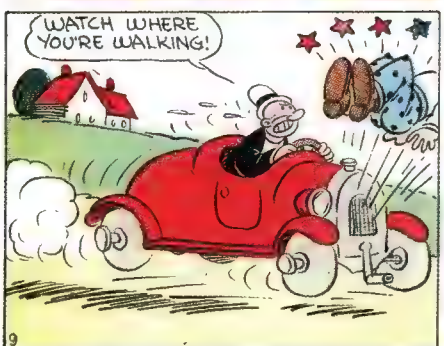
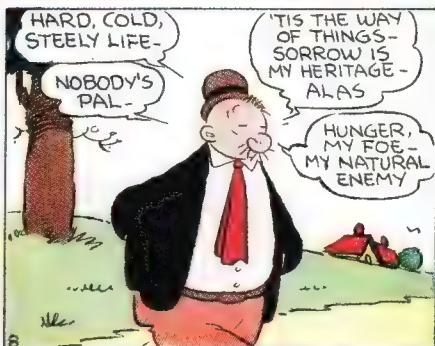
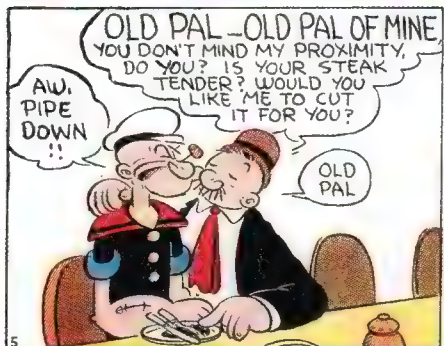
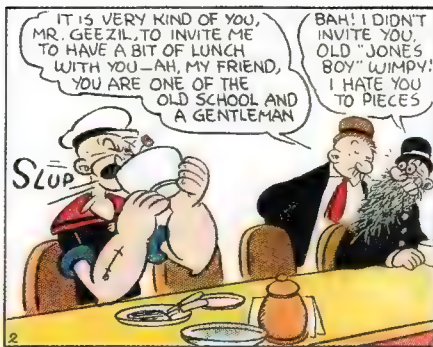
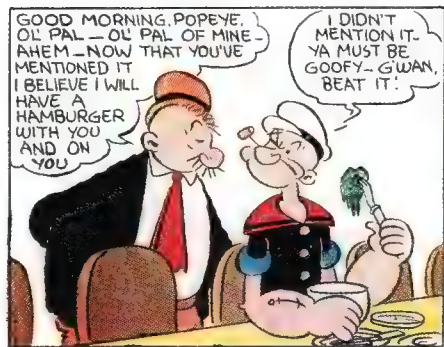


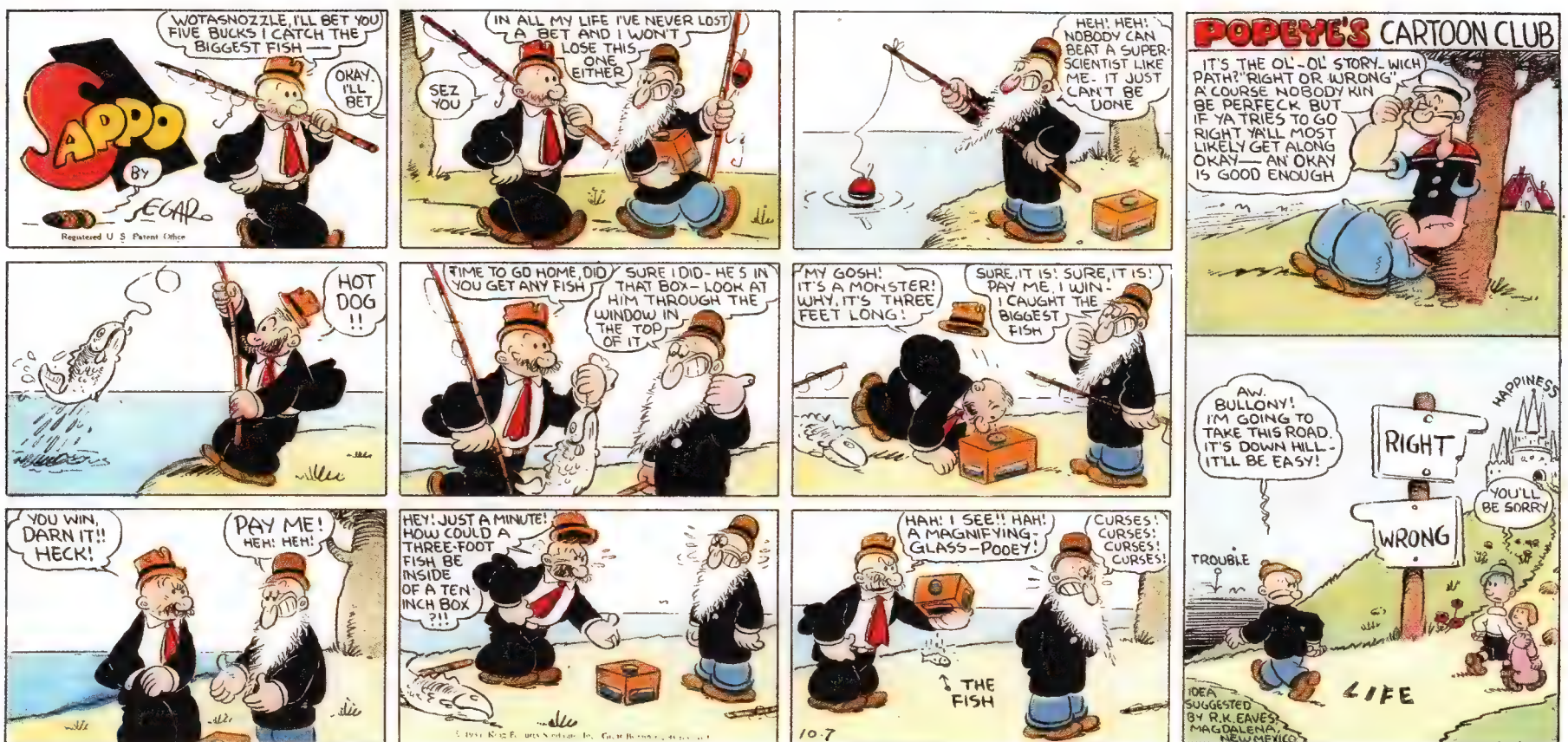


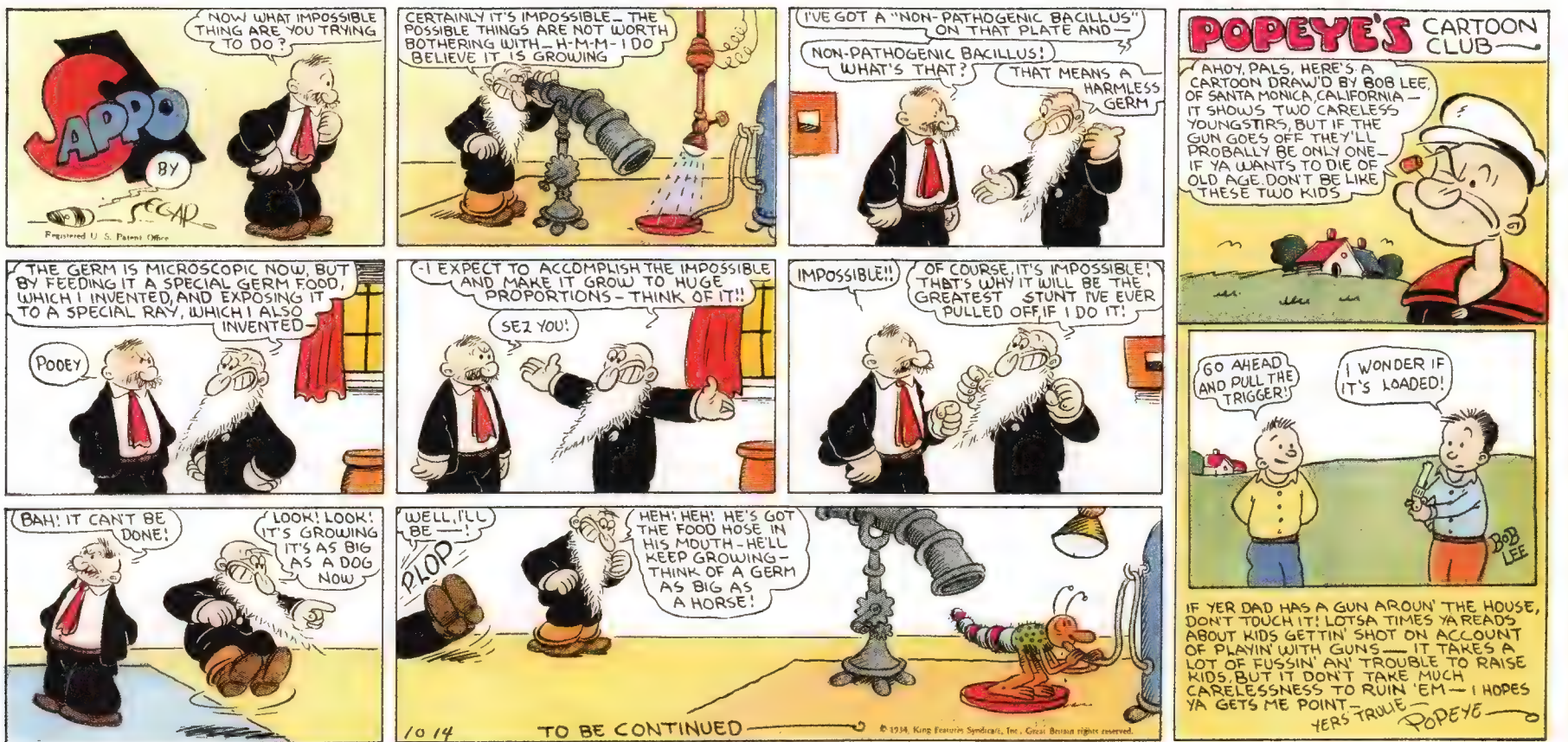


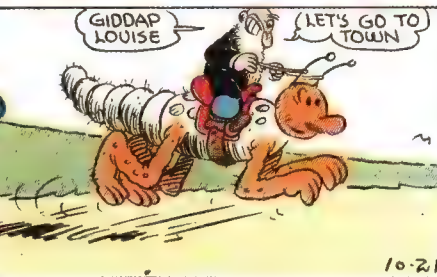
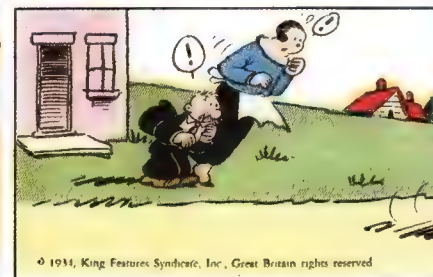
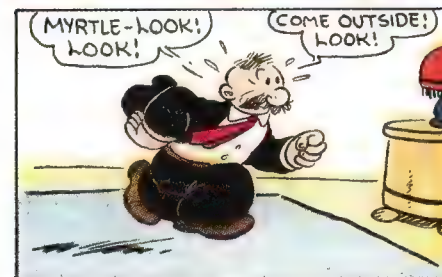
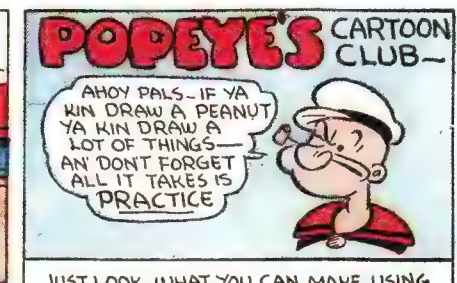
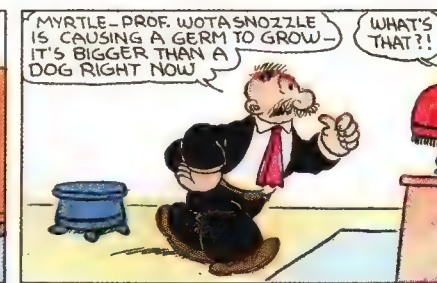
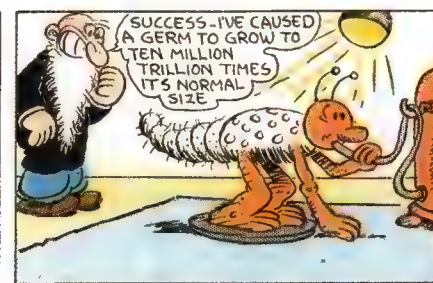
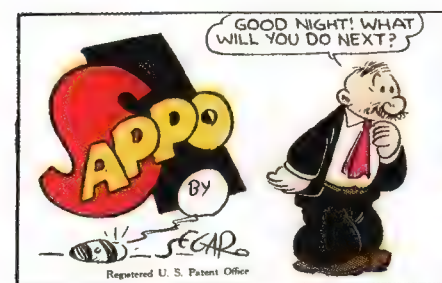
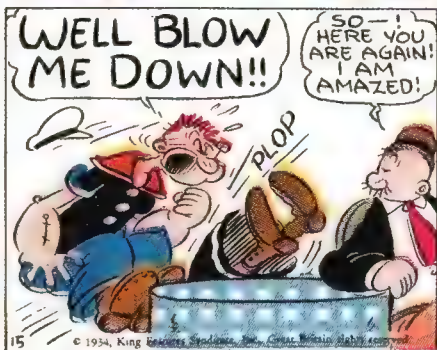
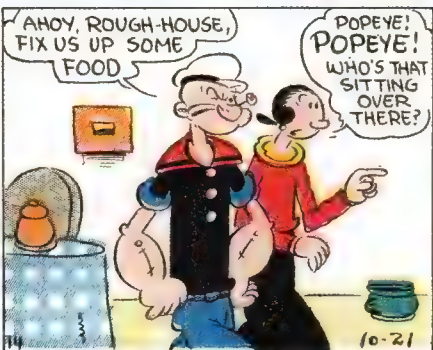
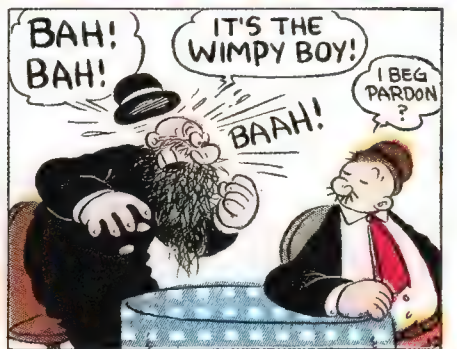
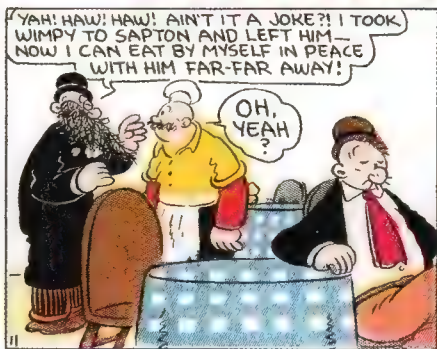
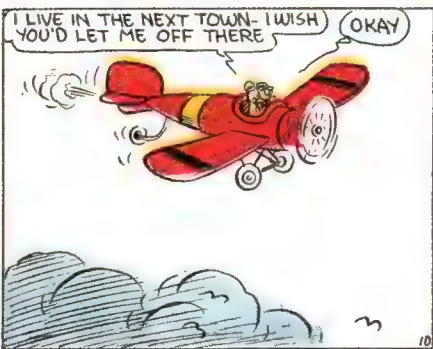
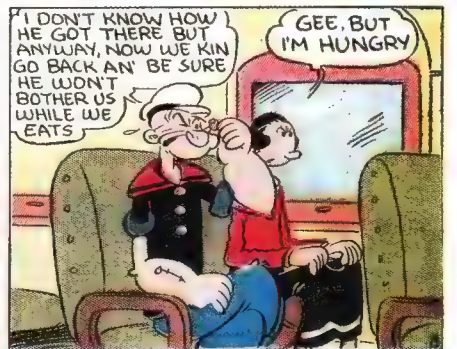
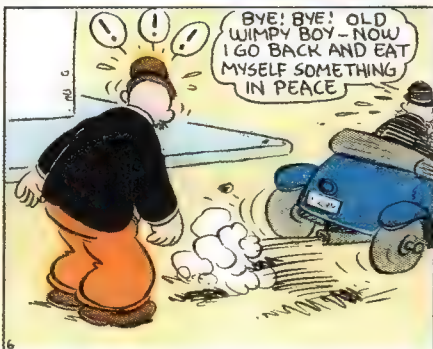
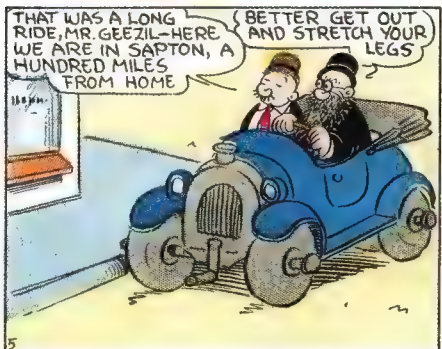
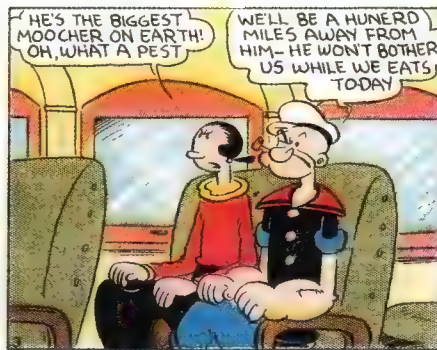
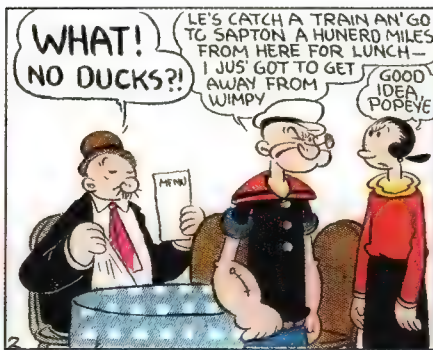




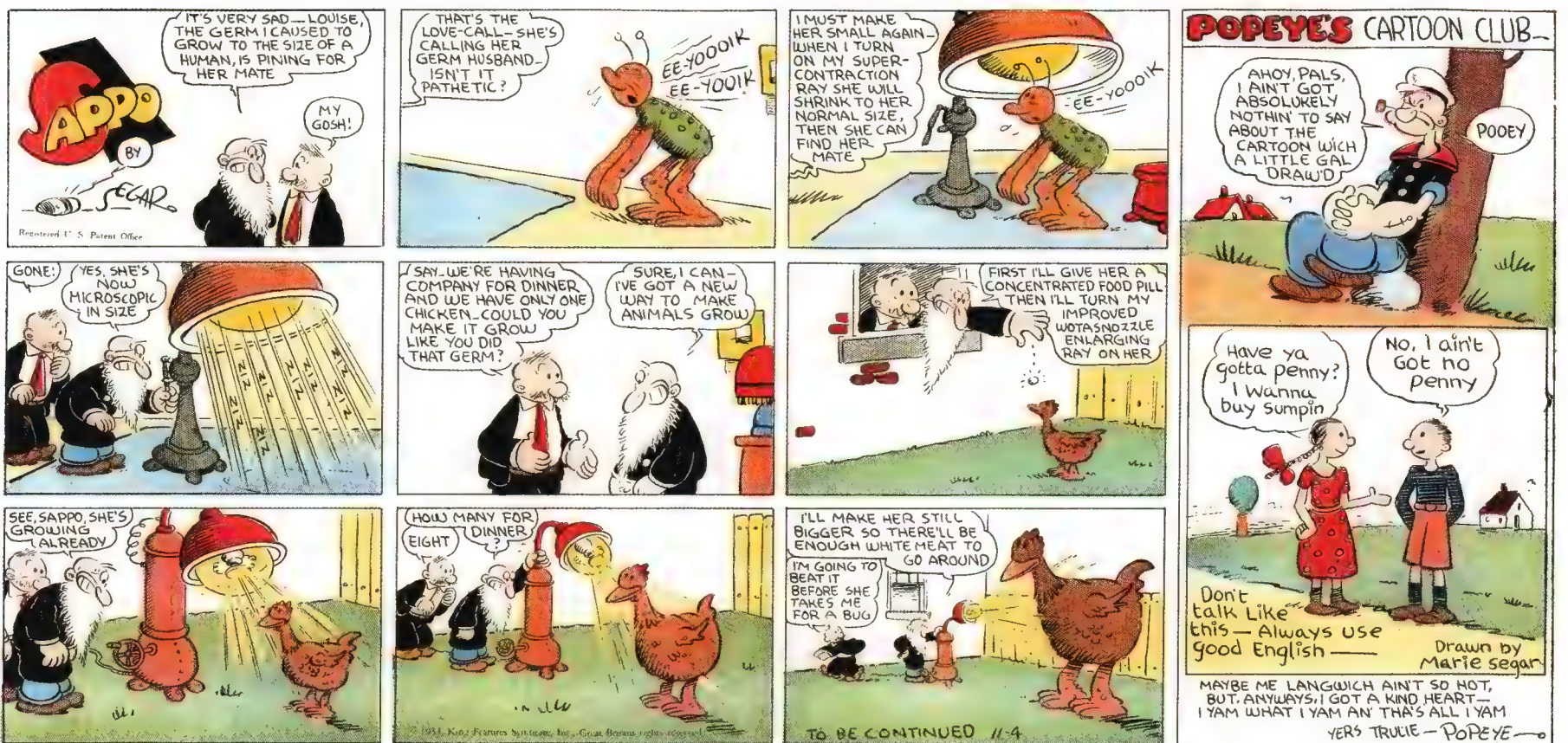




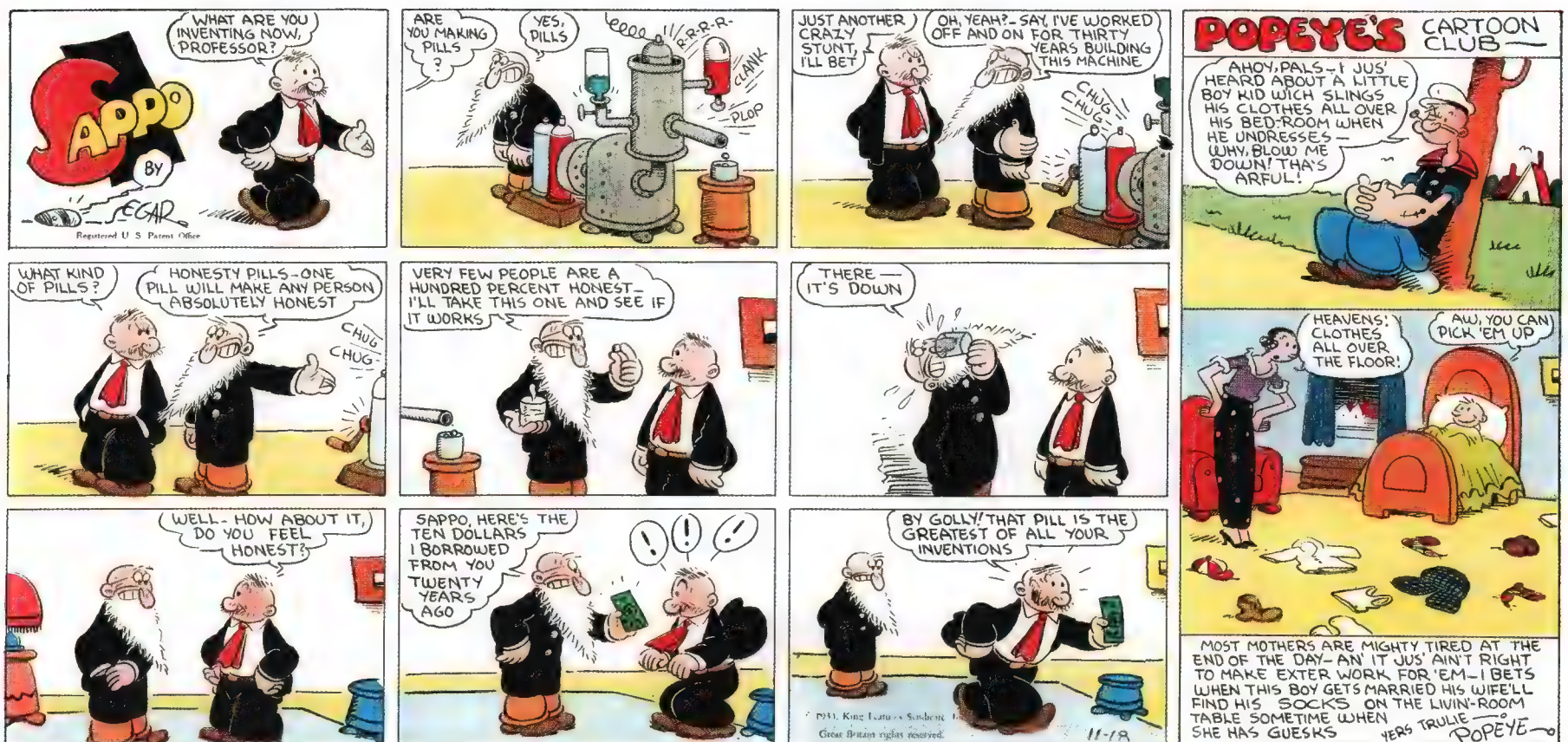


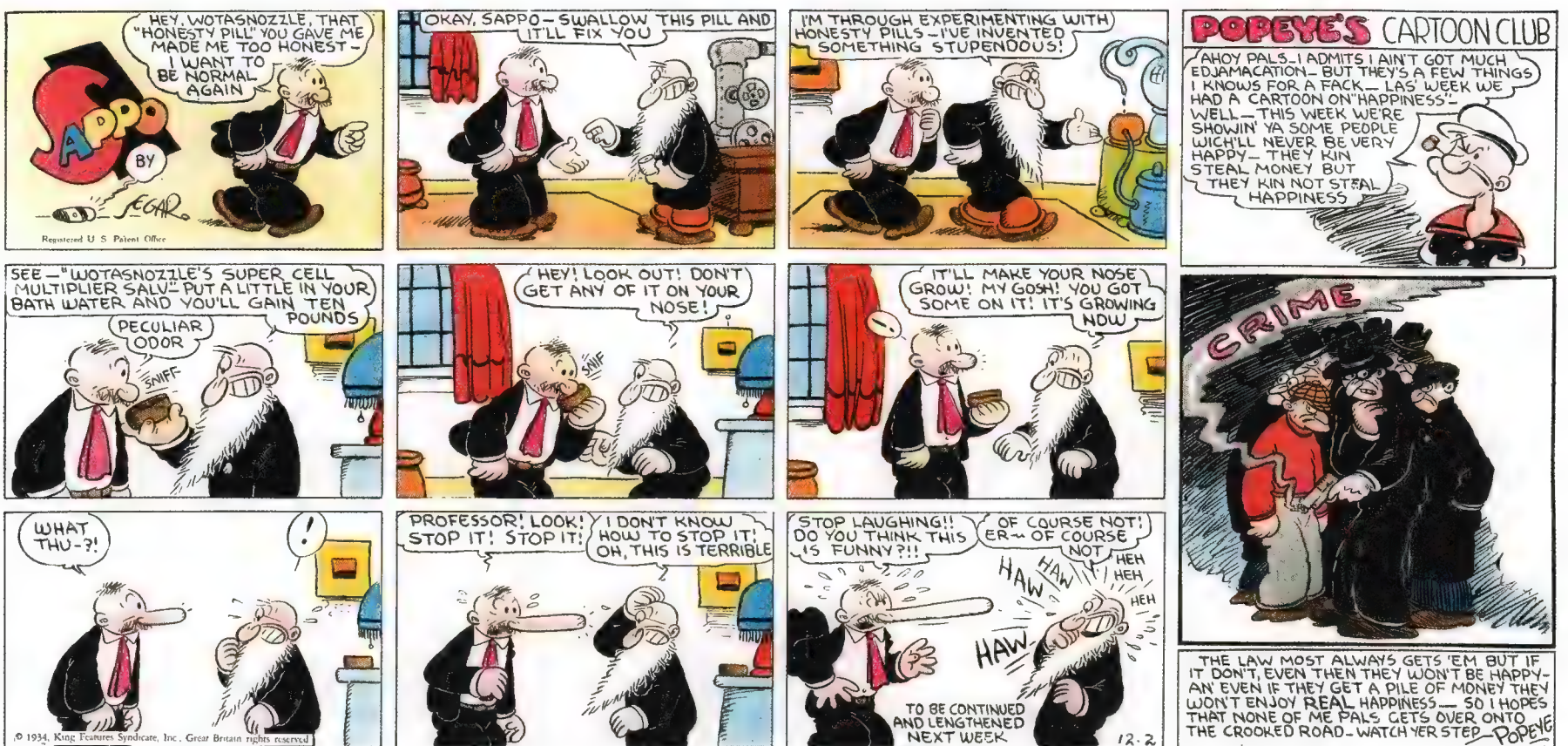


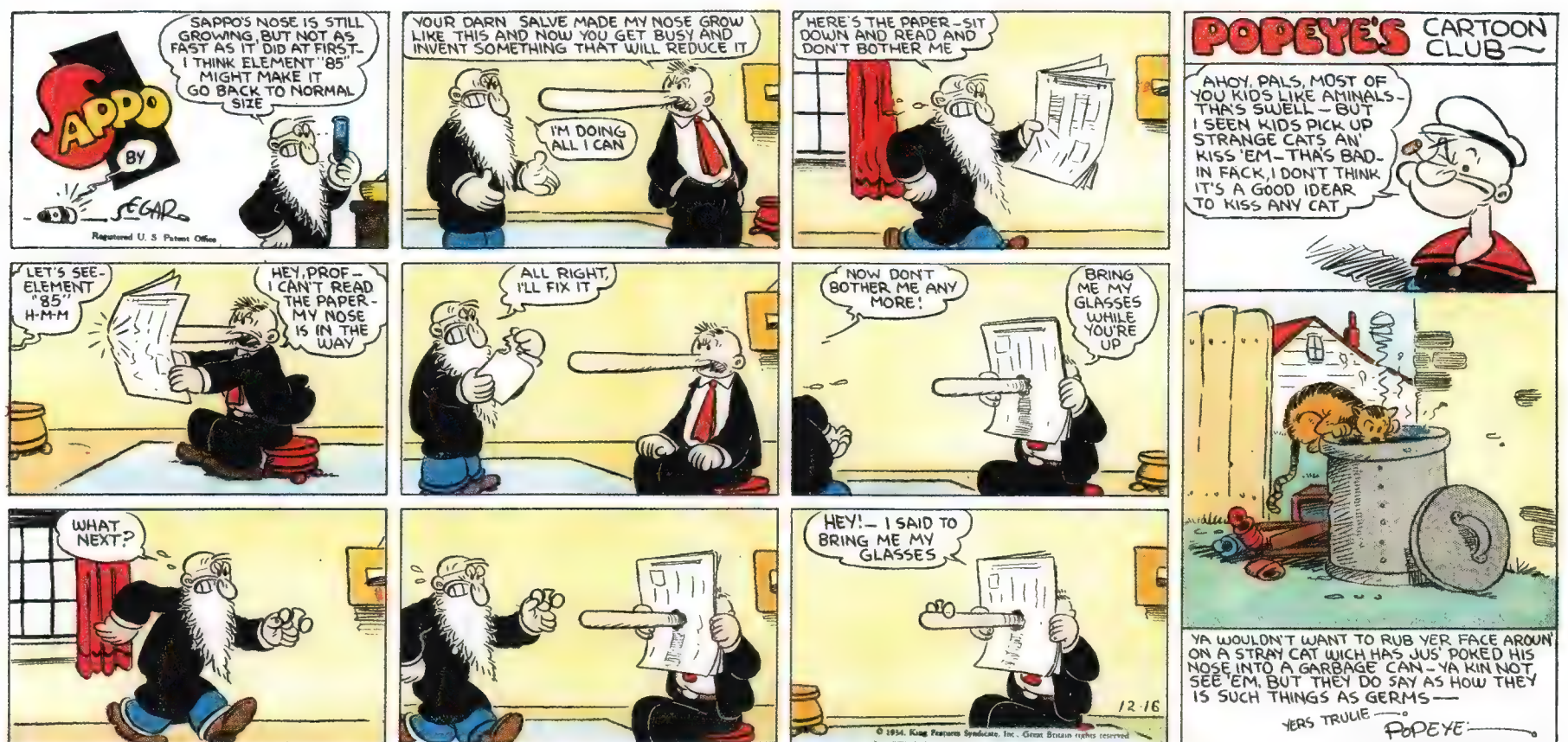


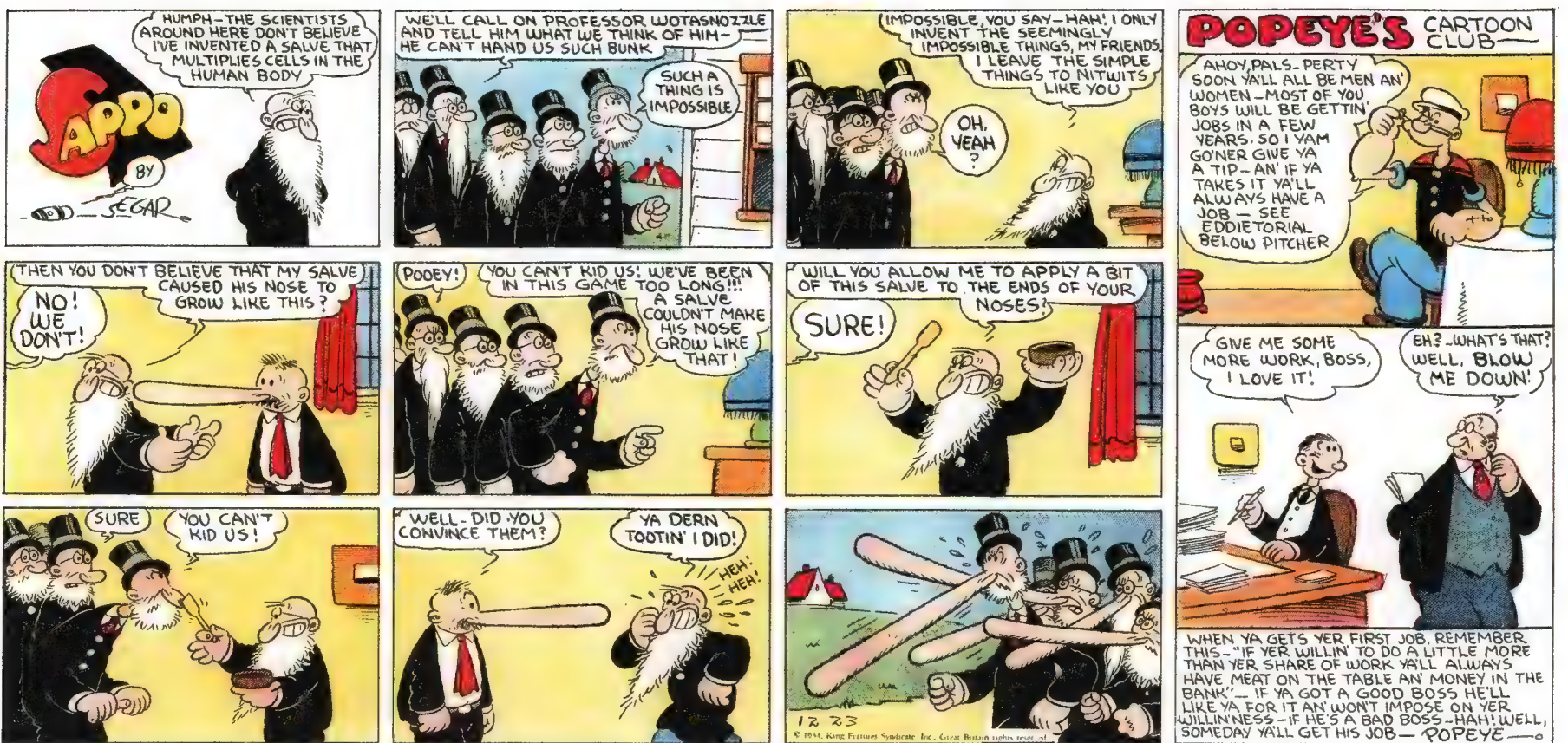
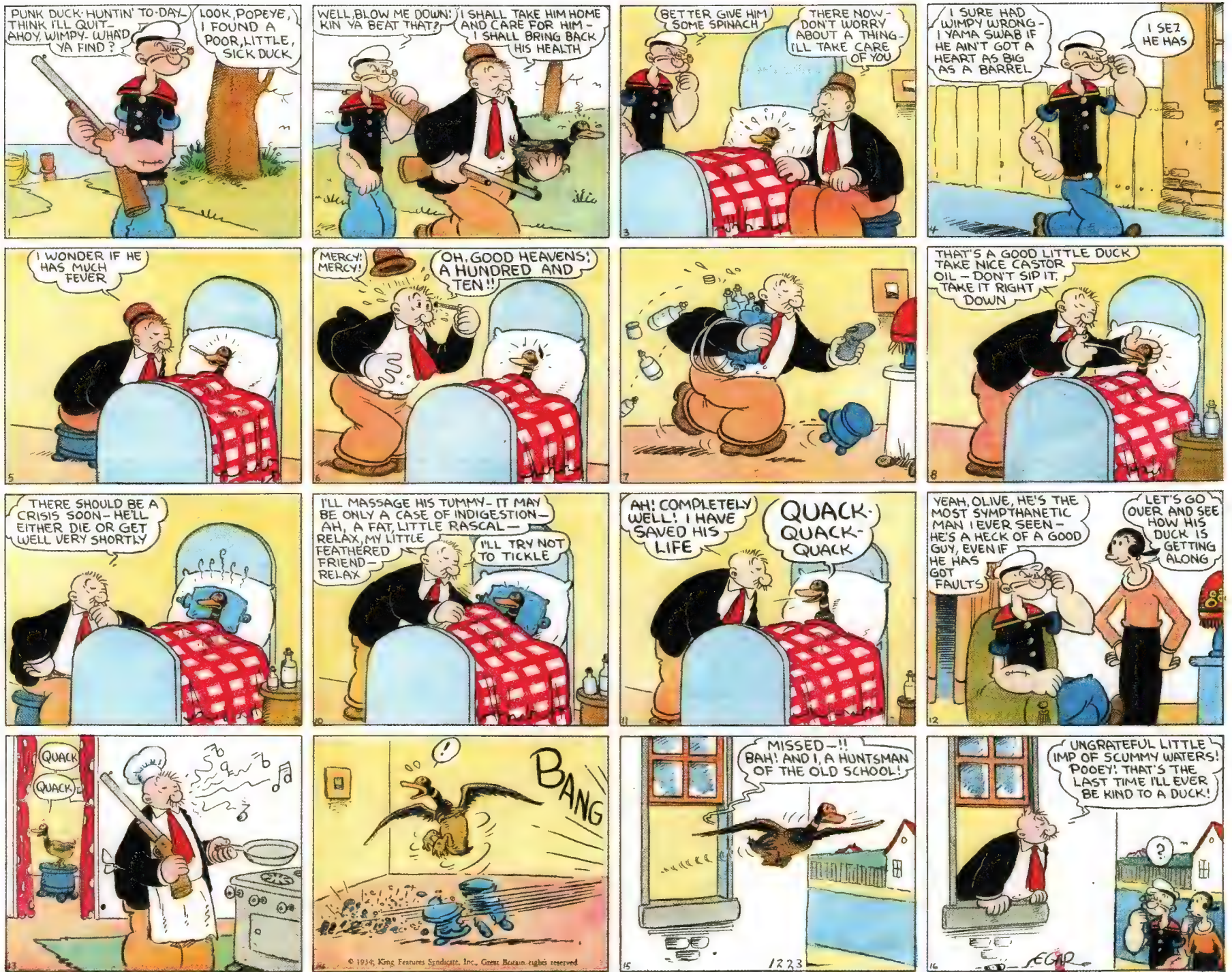




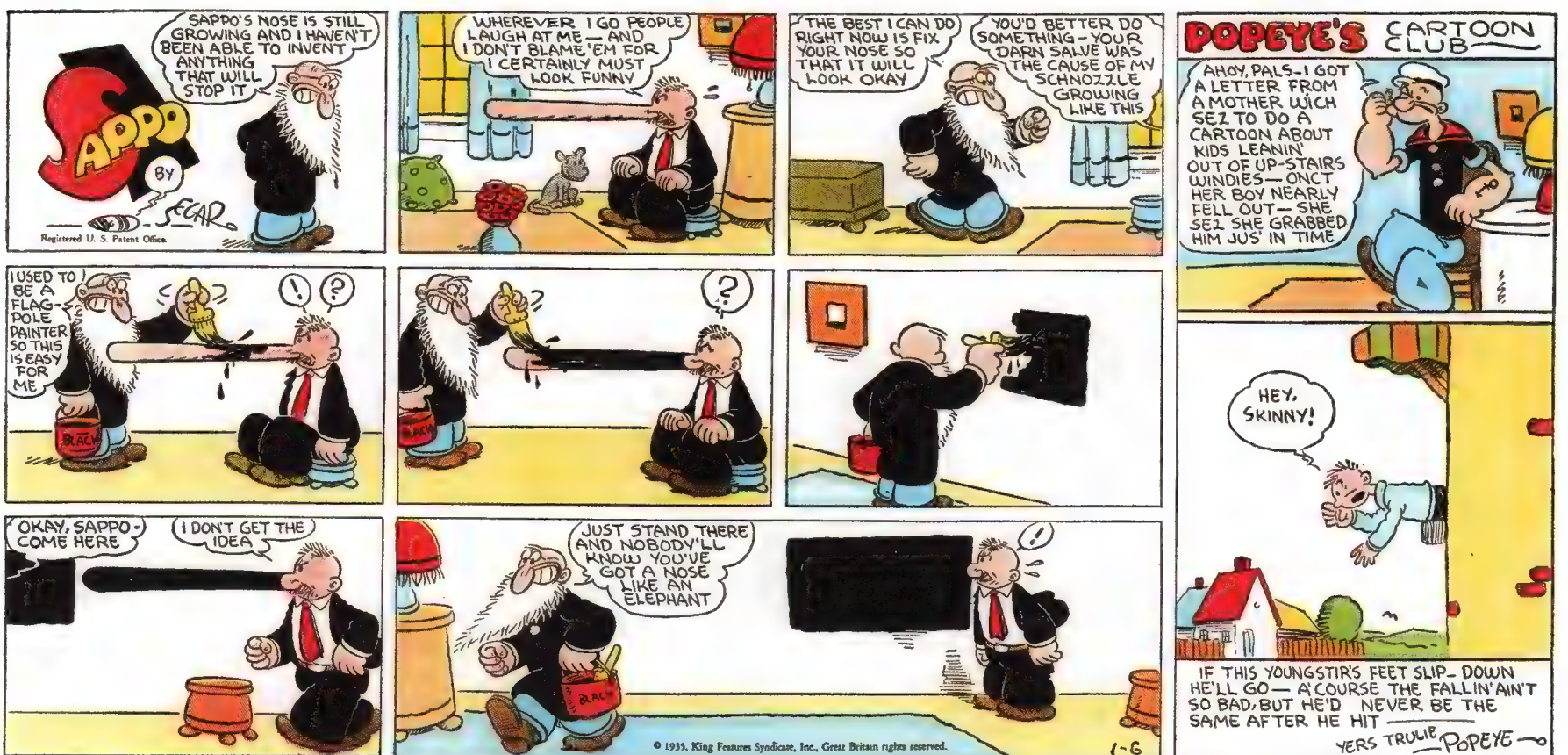


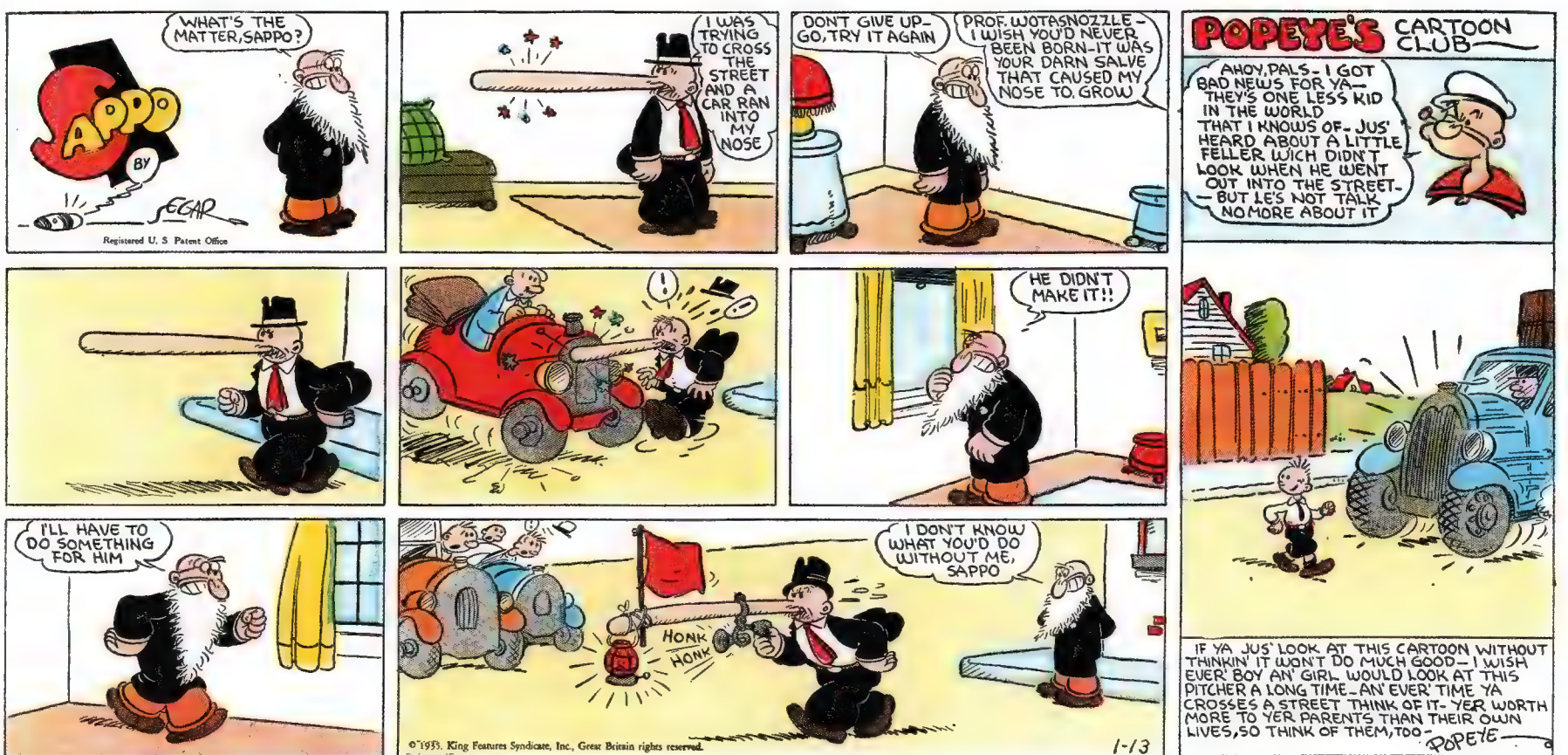




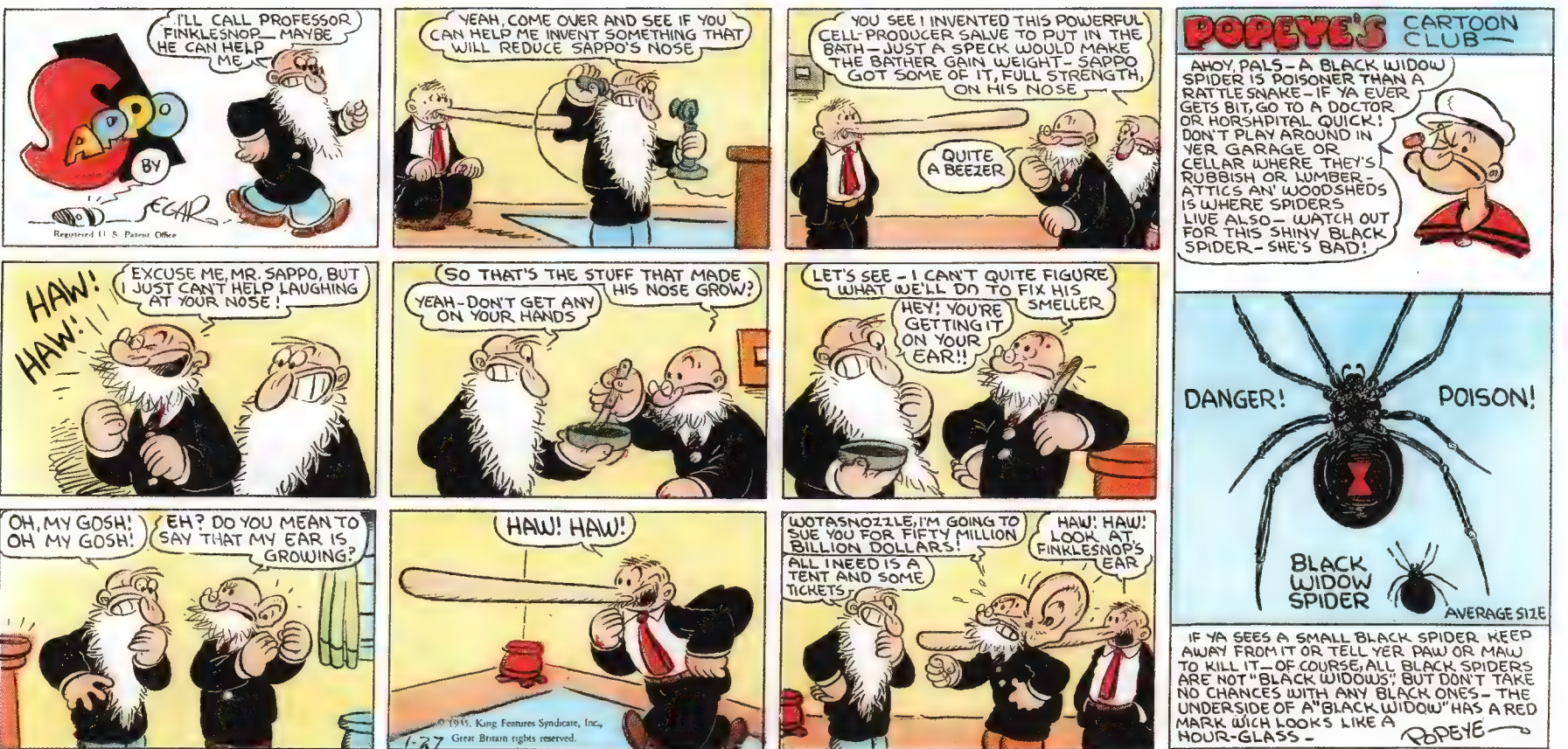


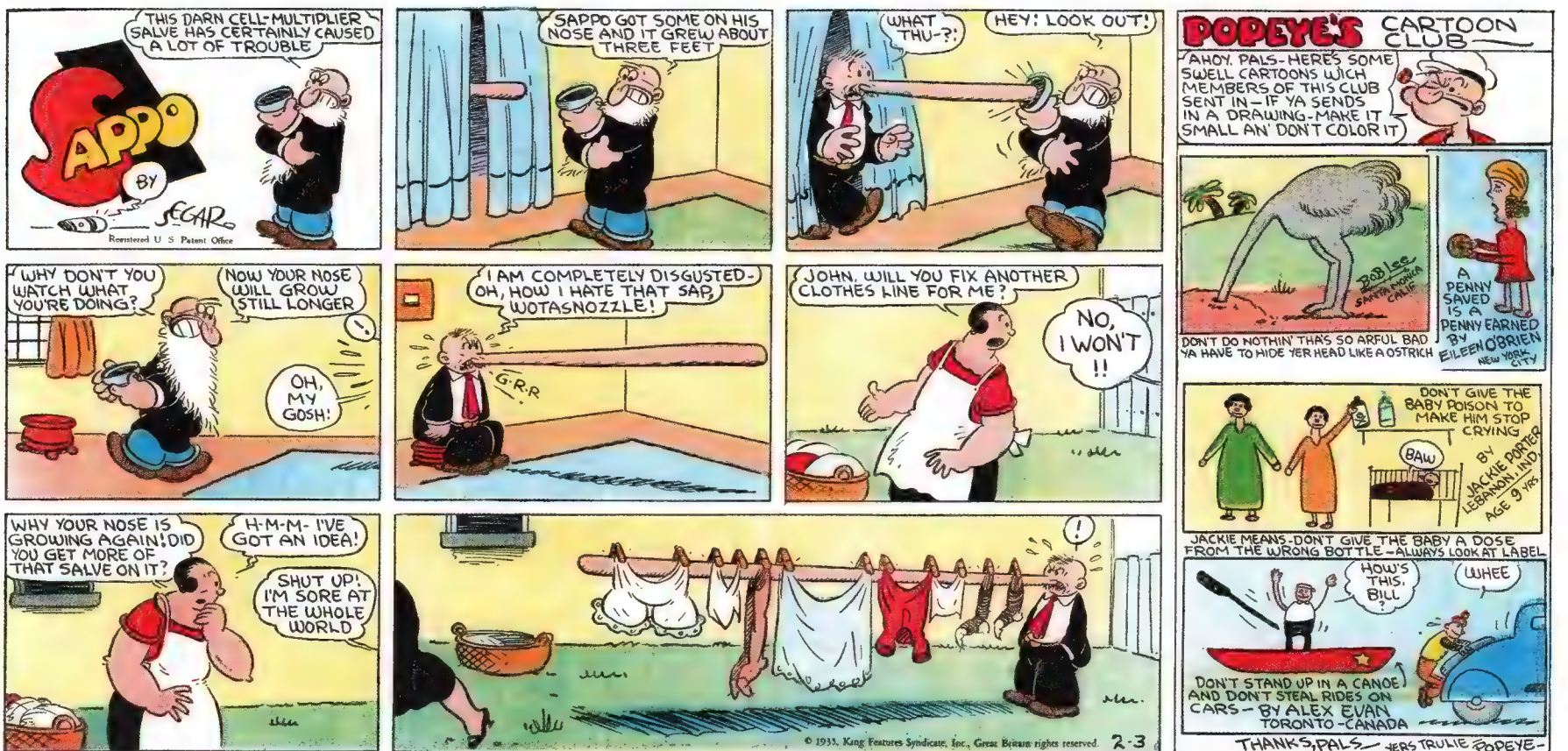


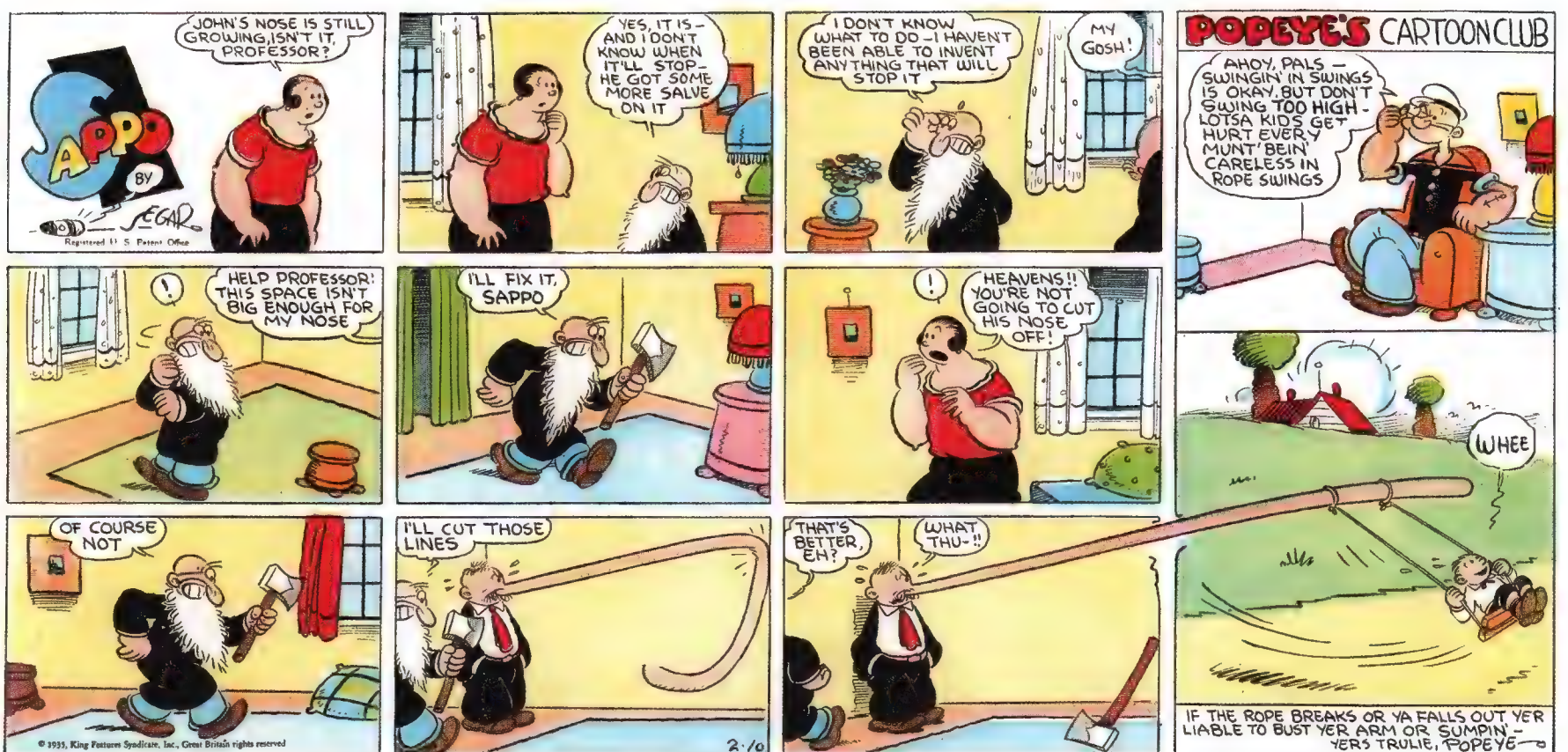


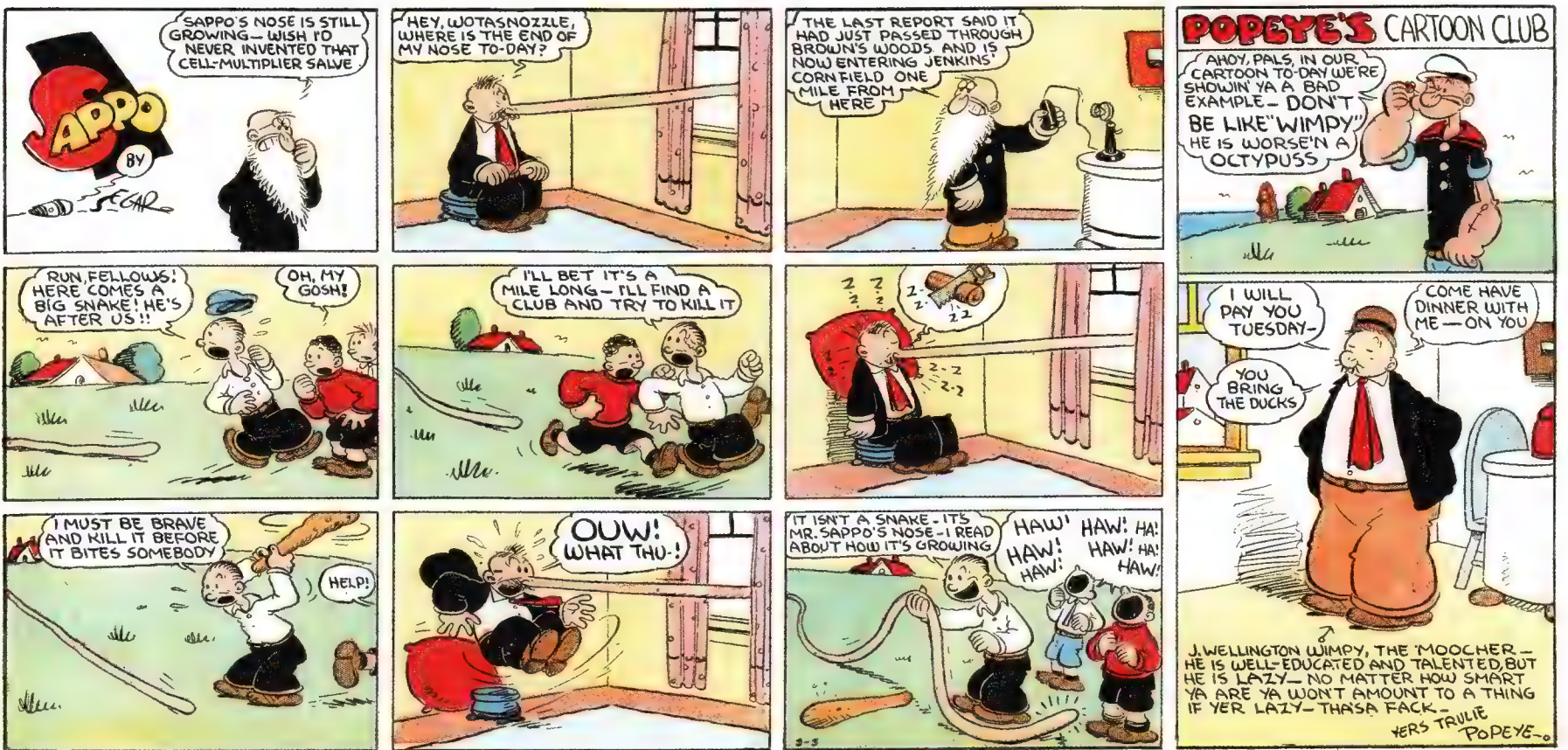
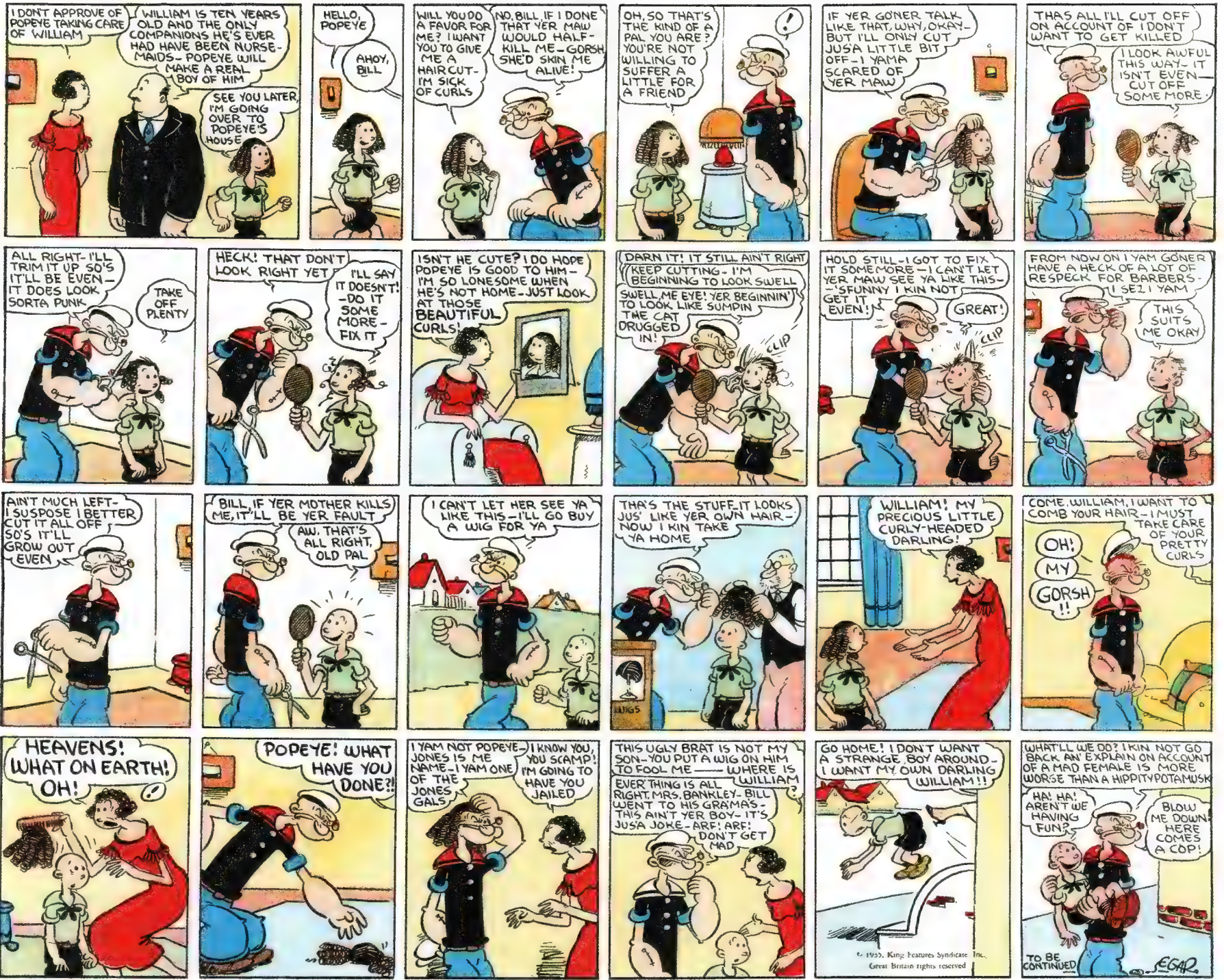


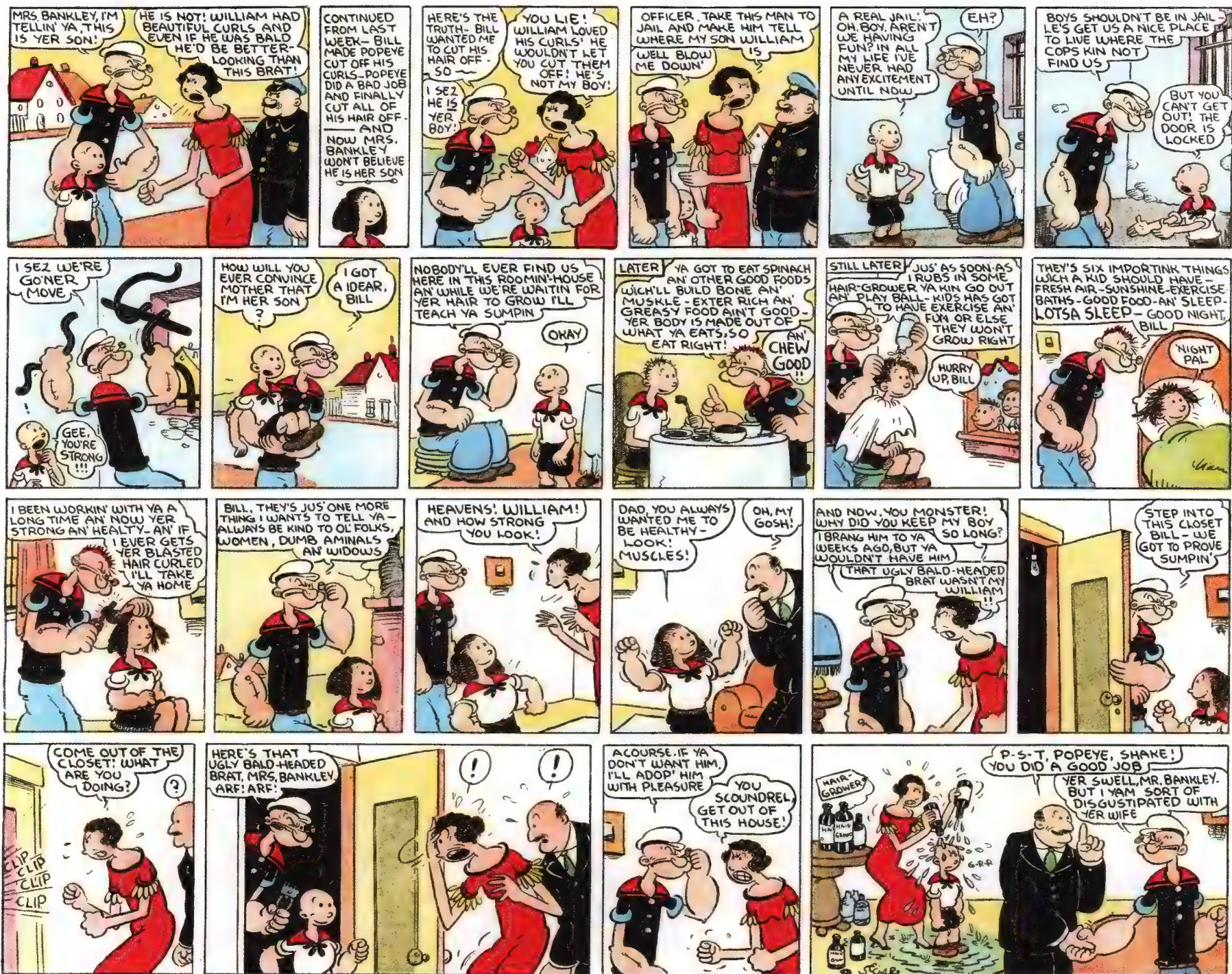












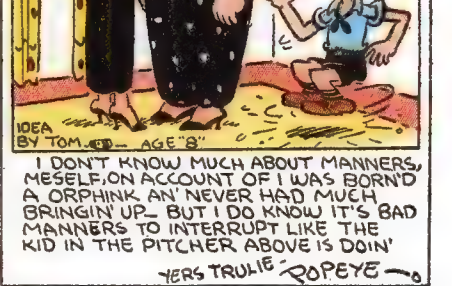
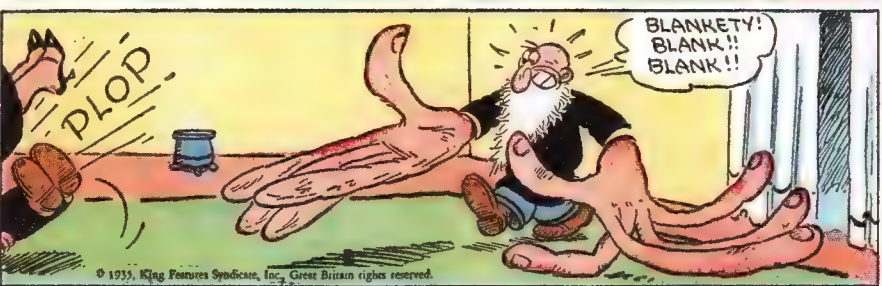
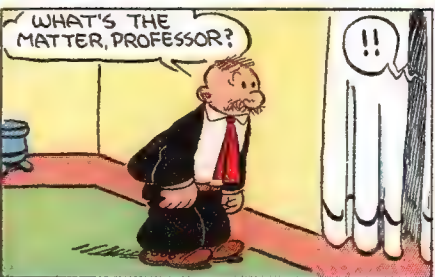
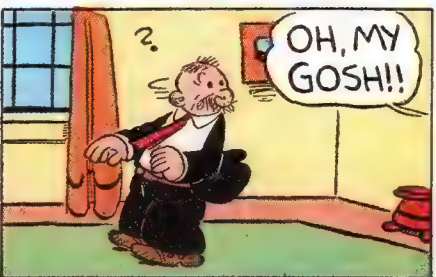
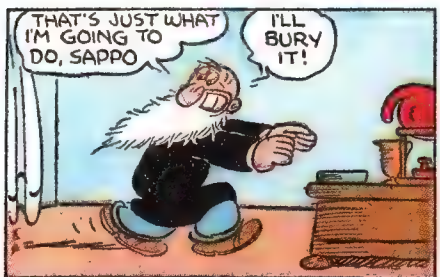
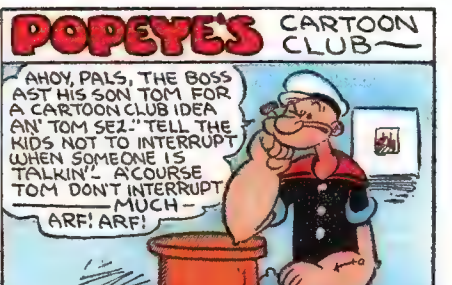
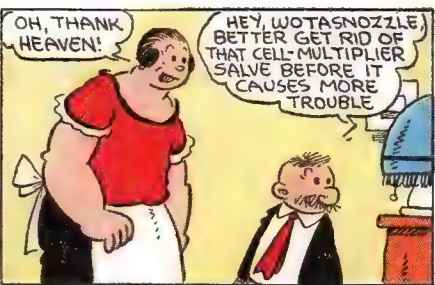
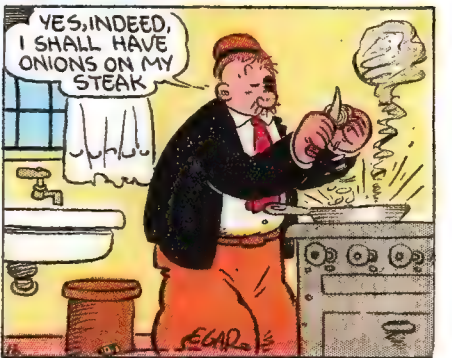
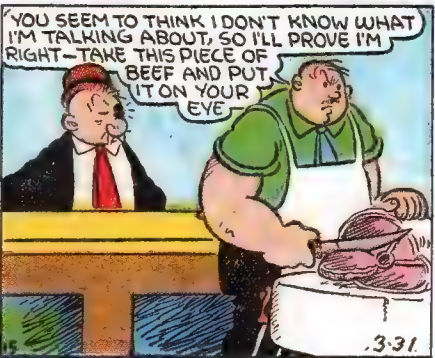
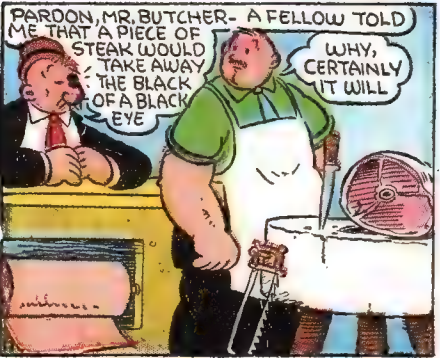
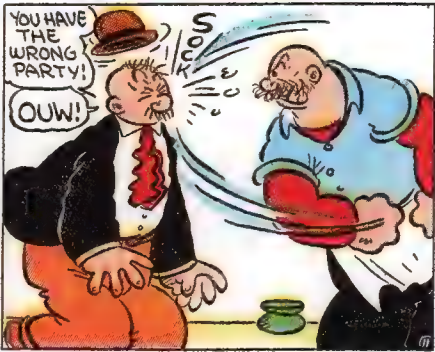
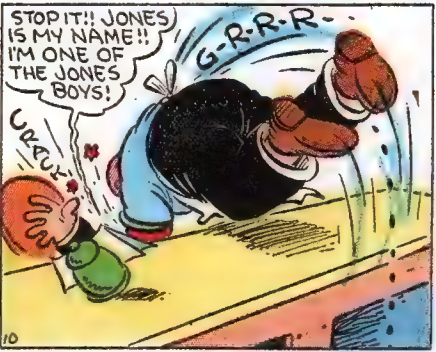
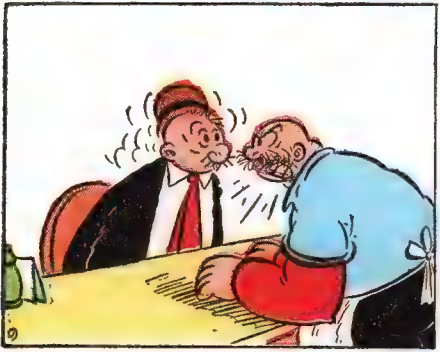
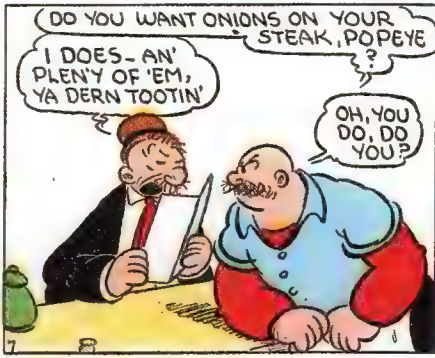
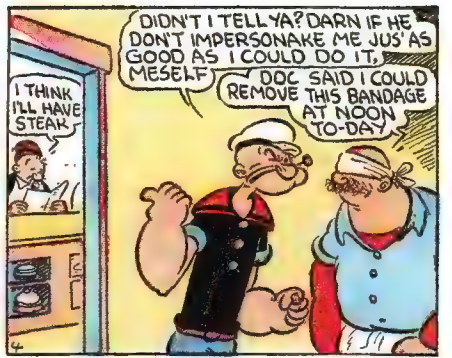
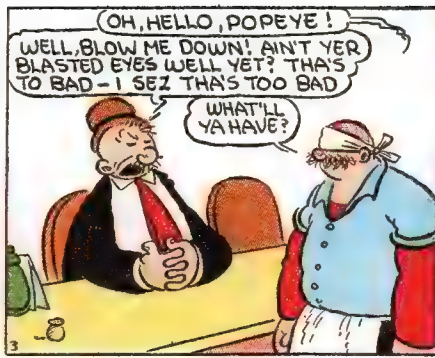
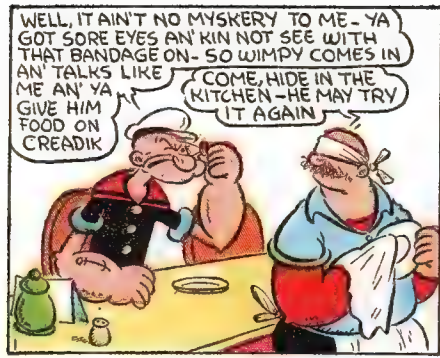


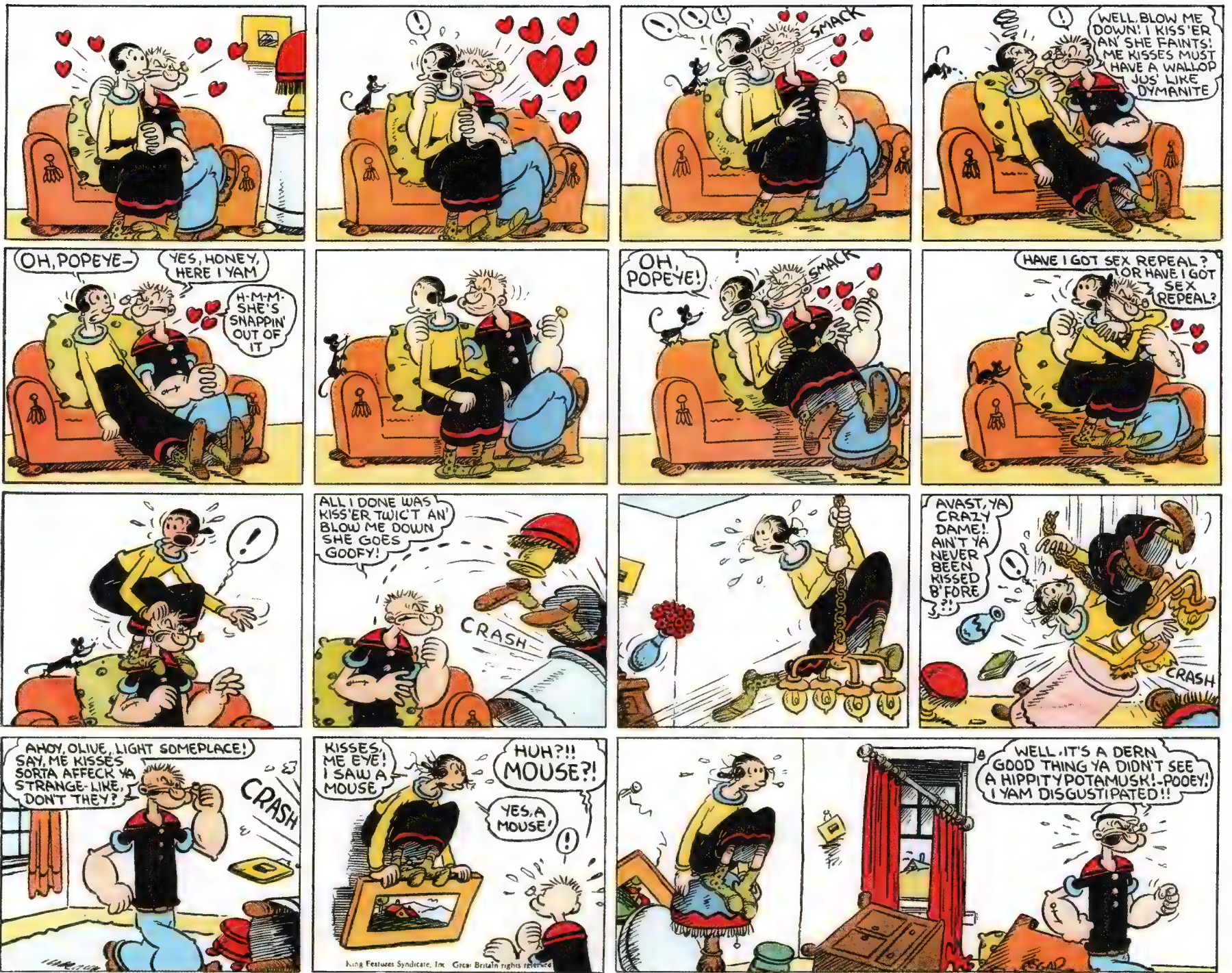


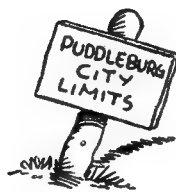
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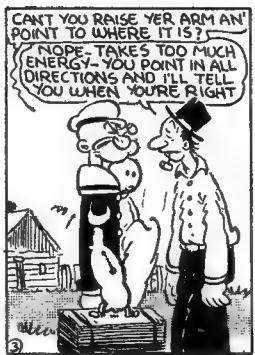
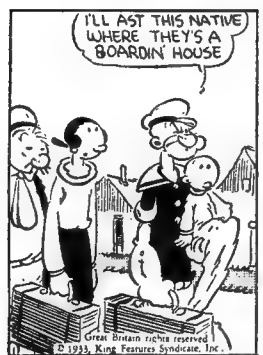
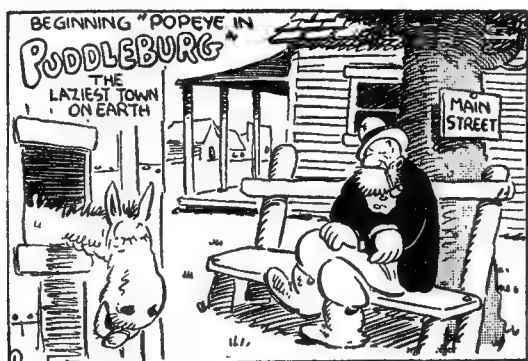
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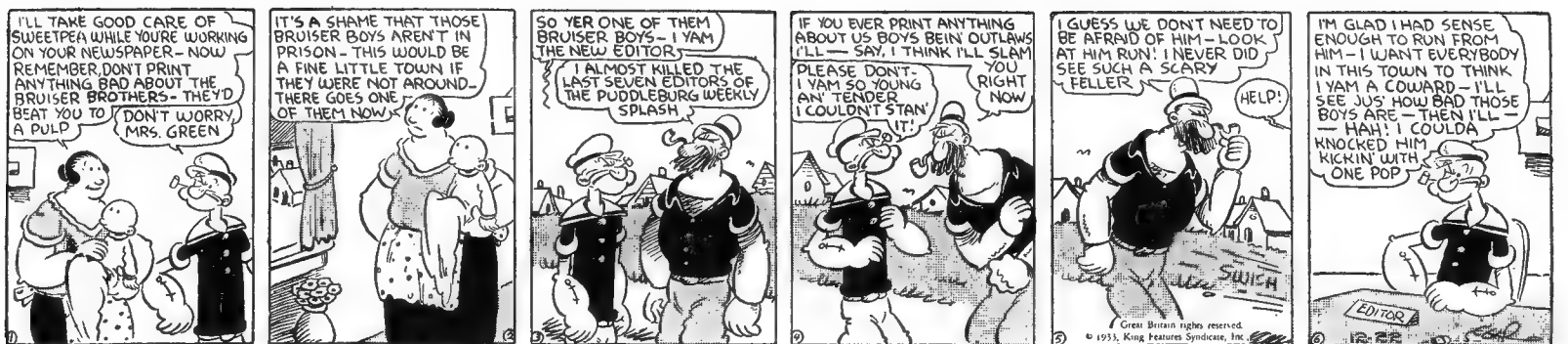
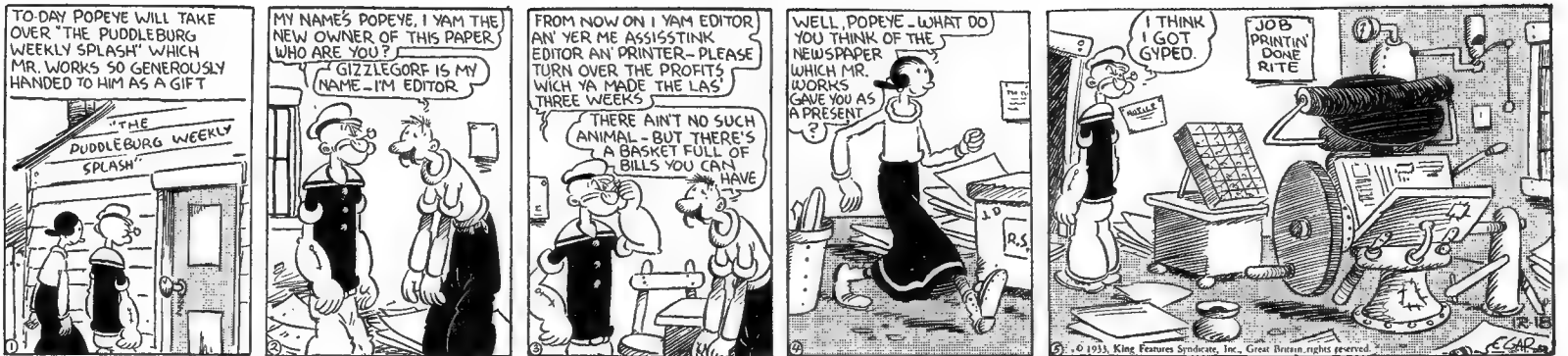
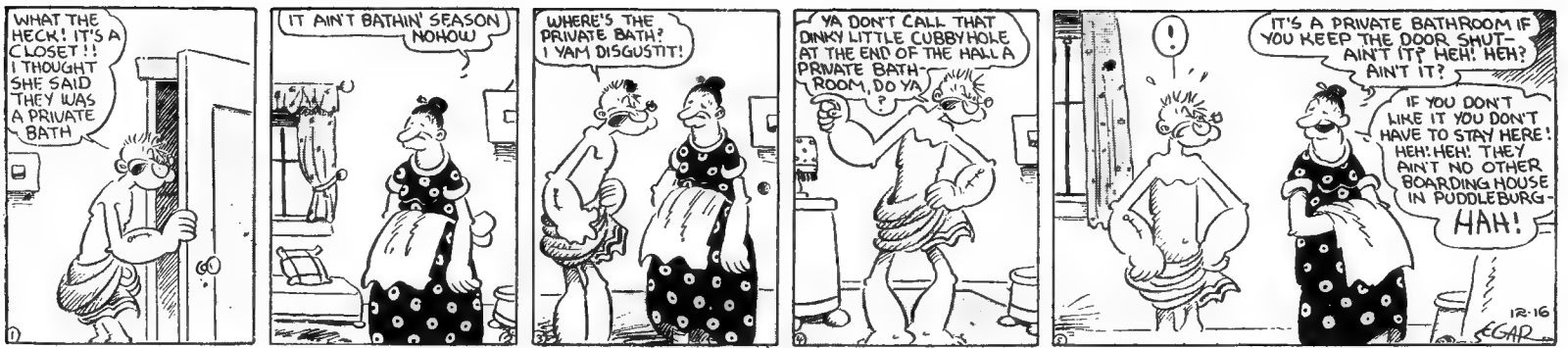






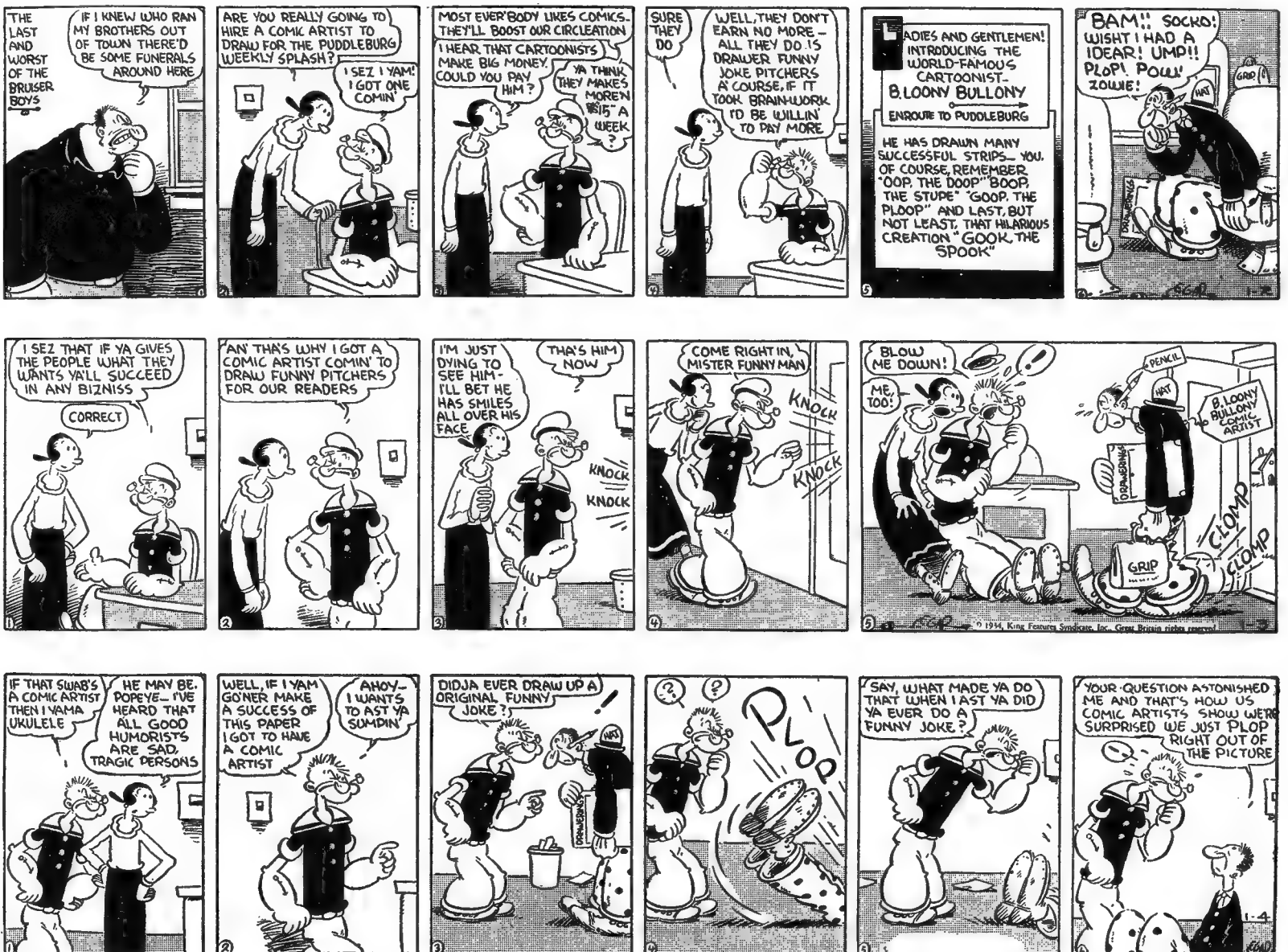
CHAPTER I:
THE LAZIEST TOWN ON EARTH

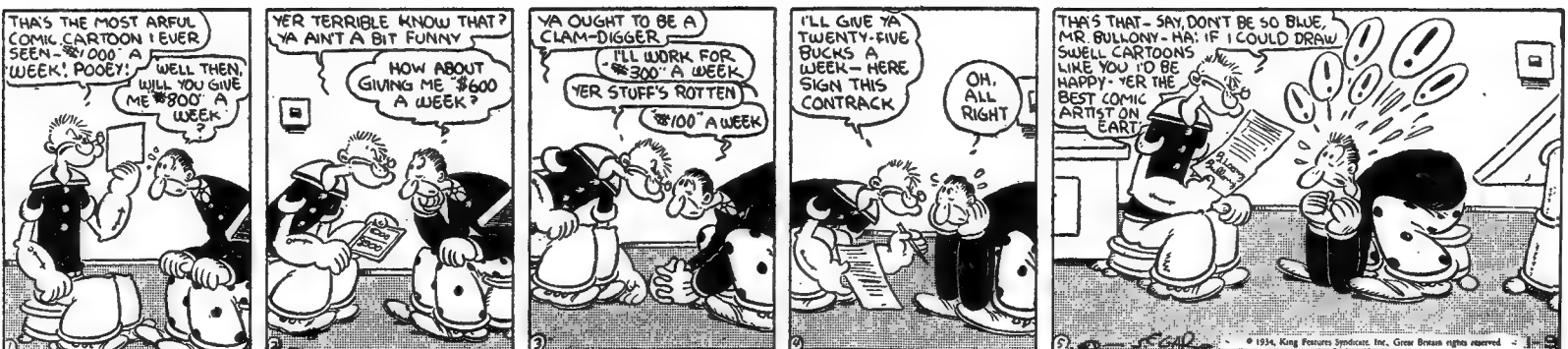
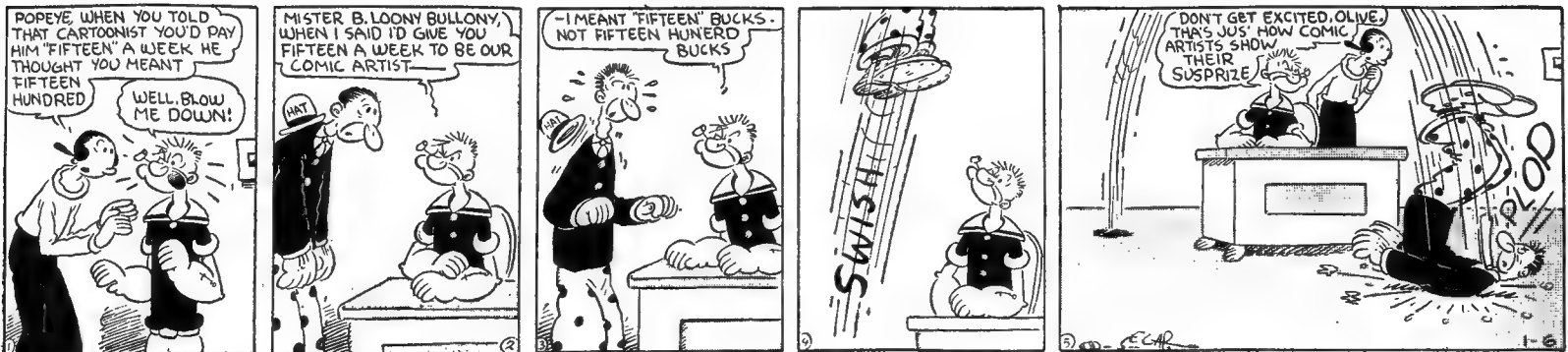




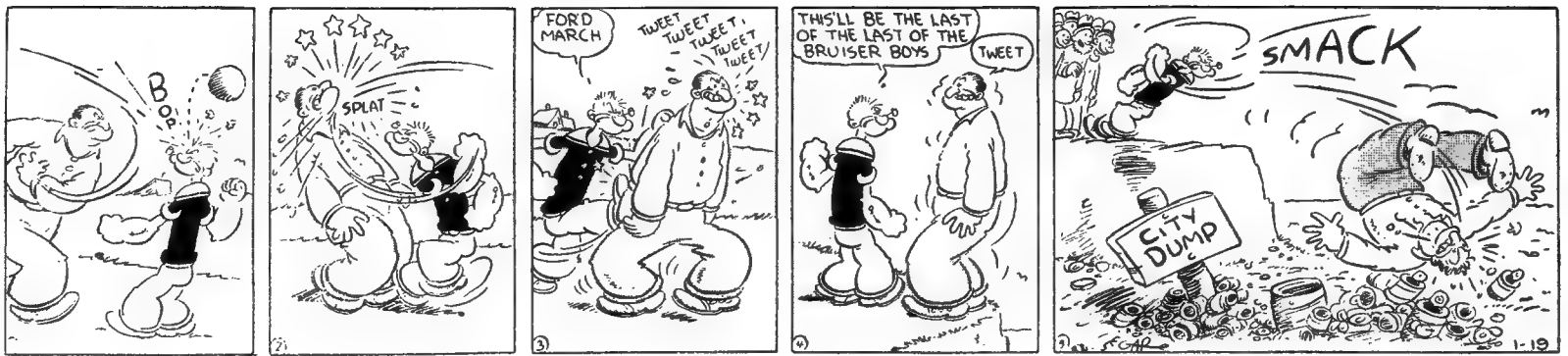


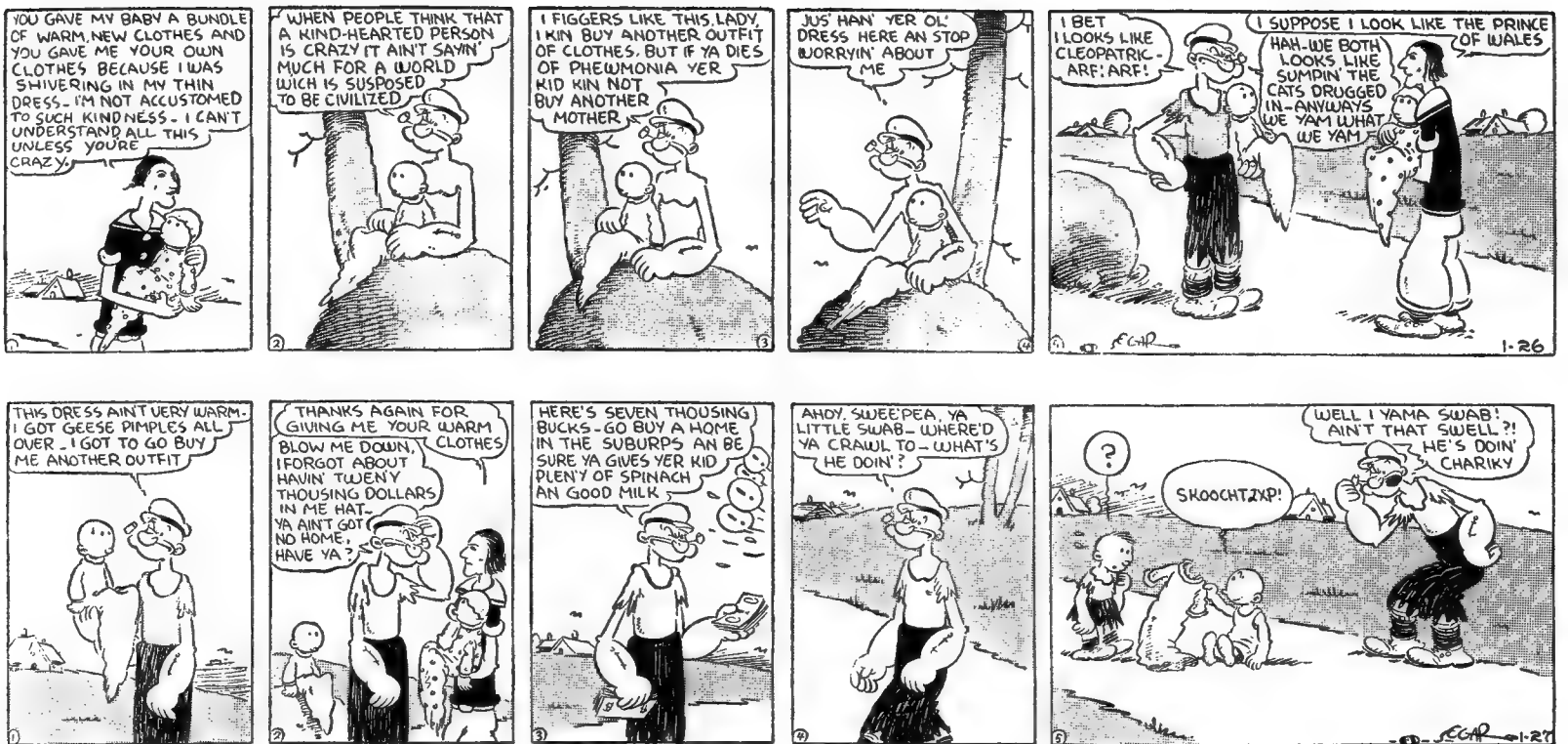
CHAPTER II: A WORLD-FAMOUS CARTOONIST





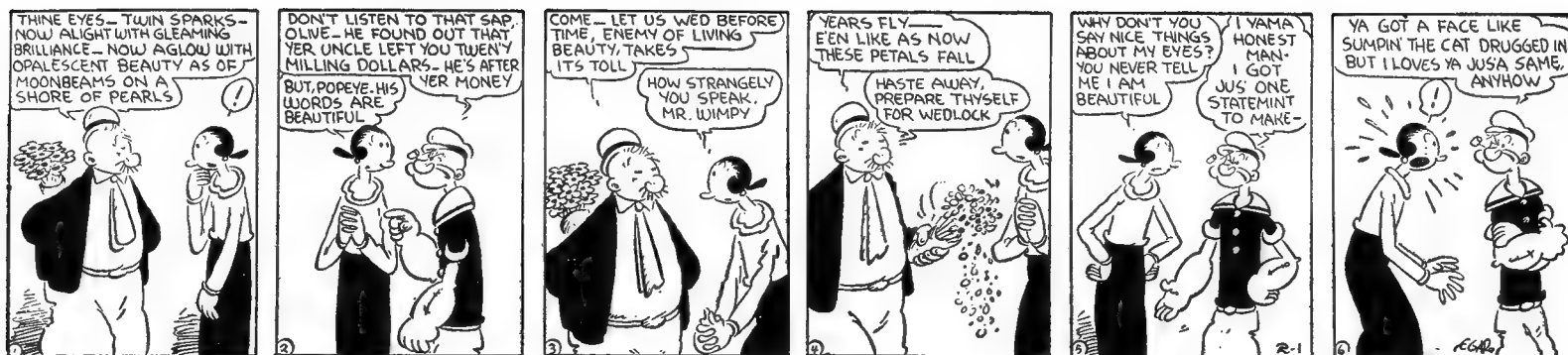


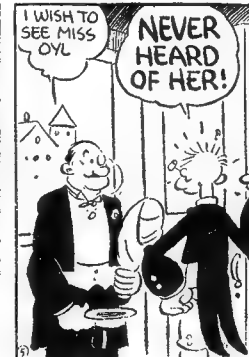
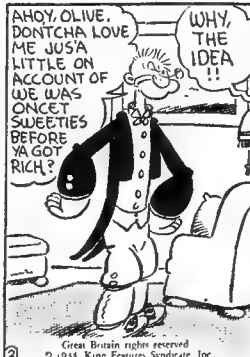
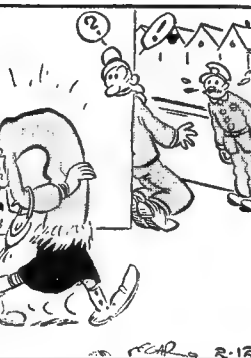
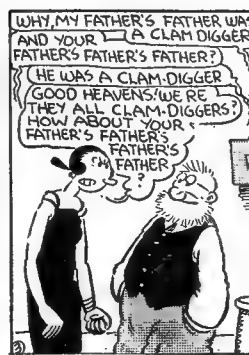
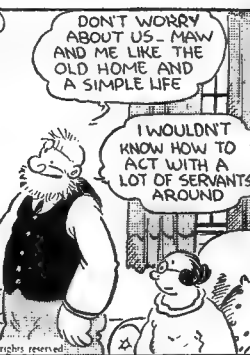


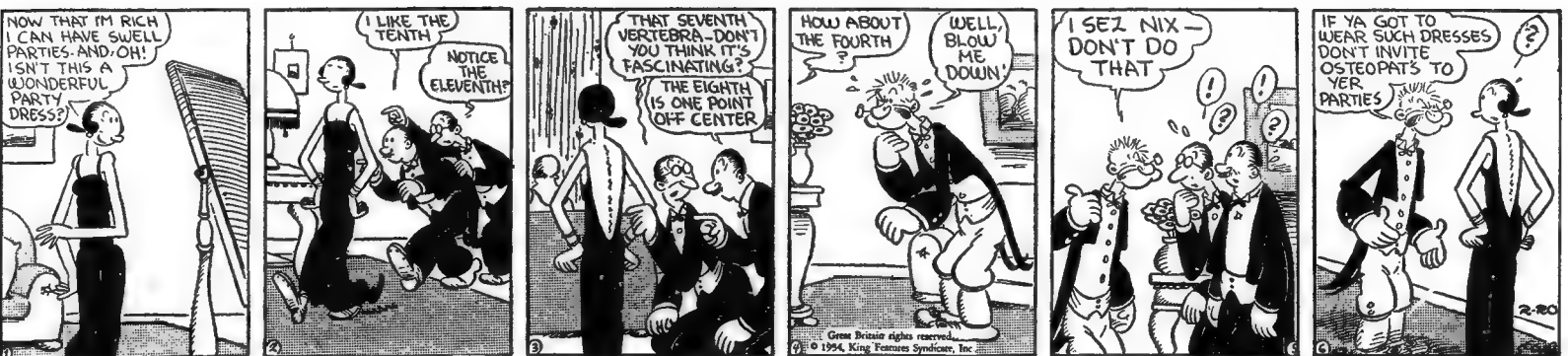


CHAPTER III: ROMANCE AND RICHES

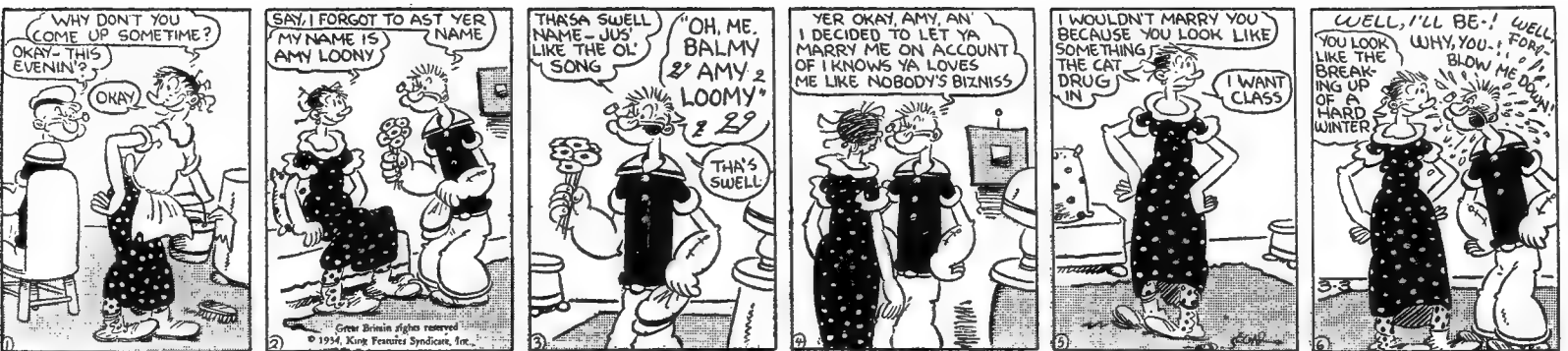
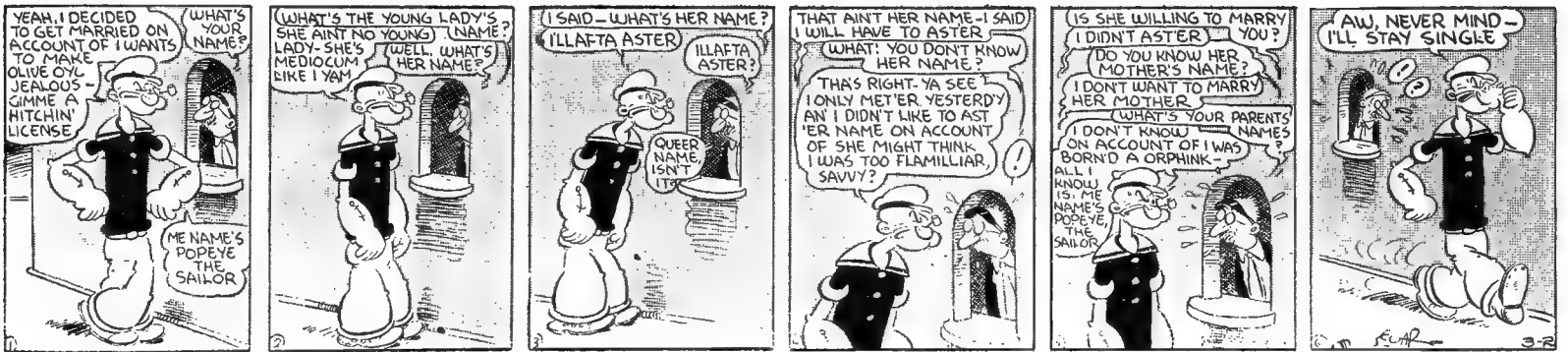
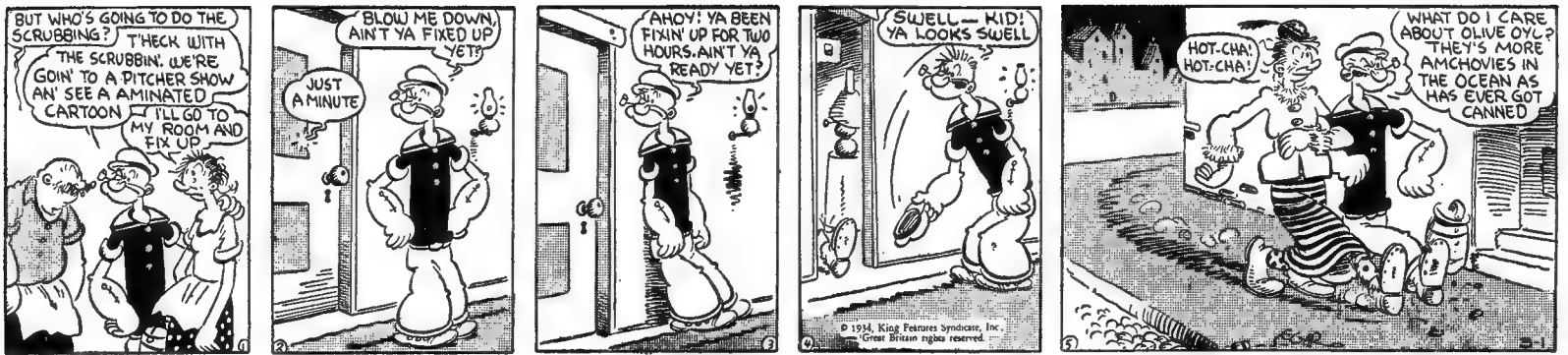


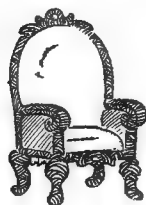






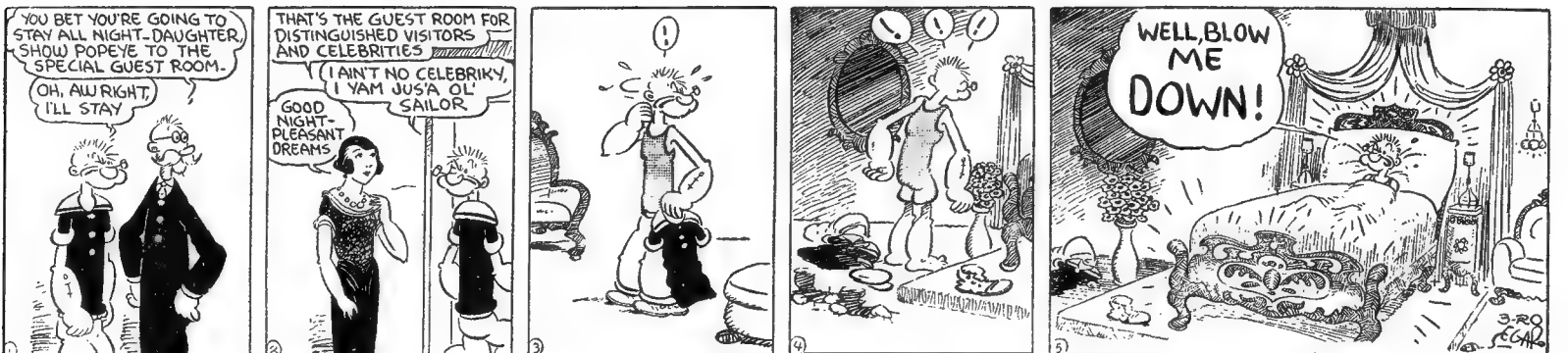
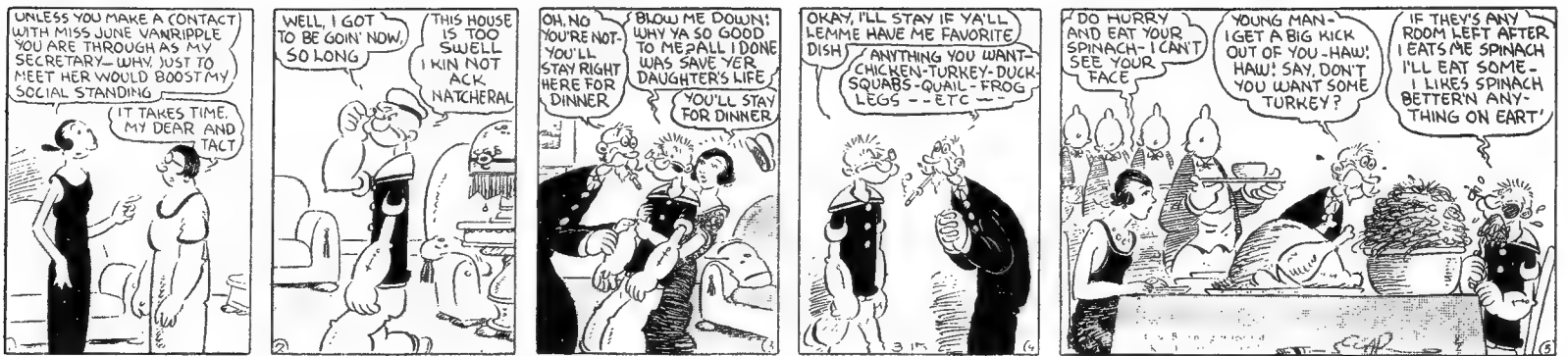
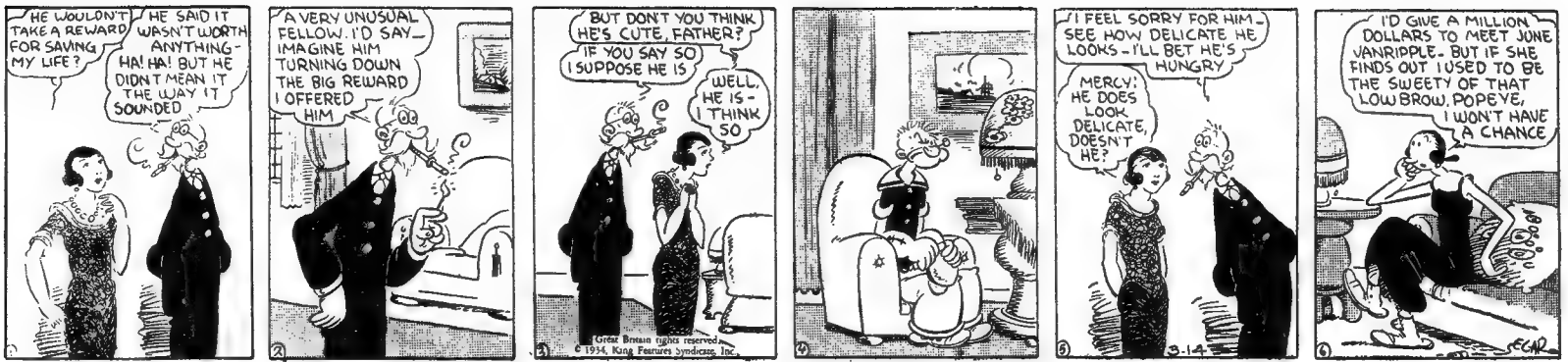


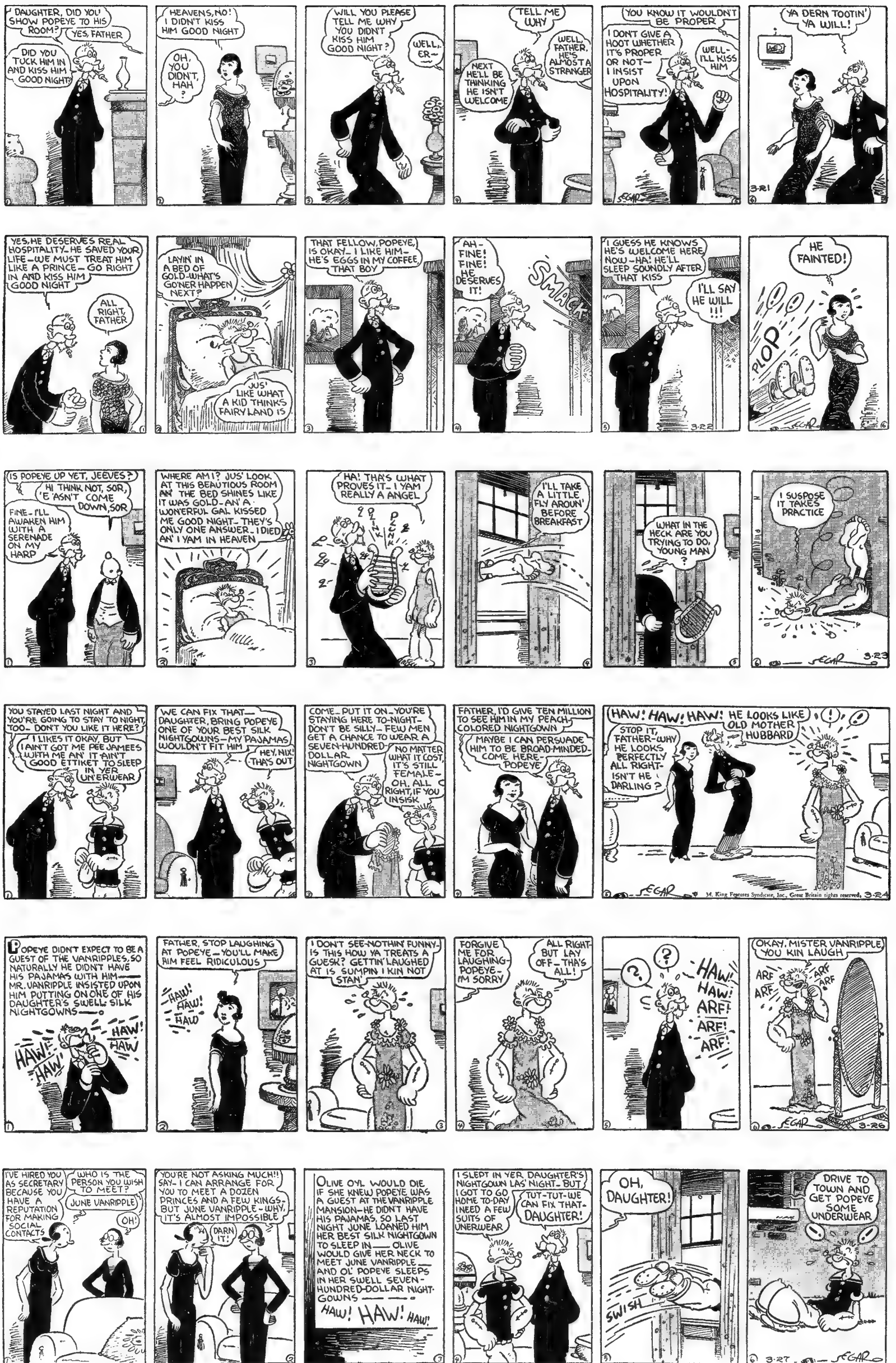


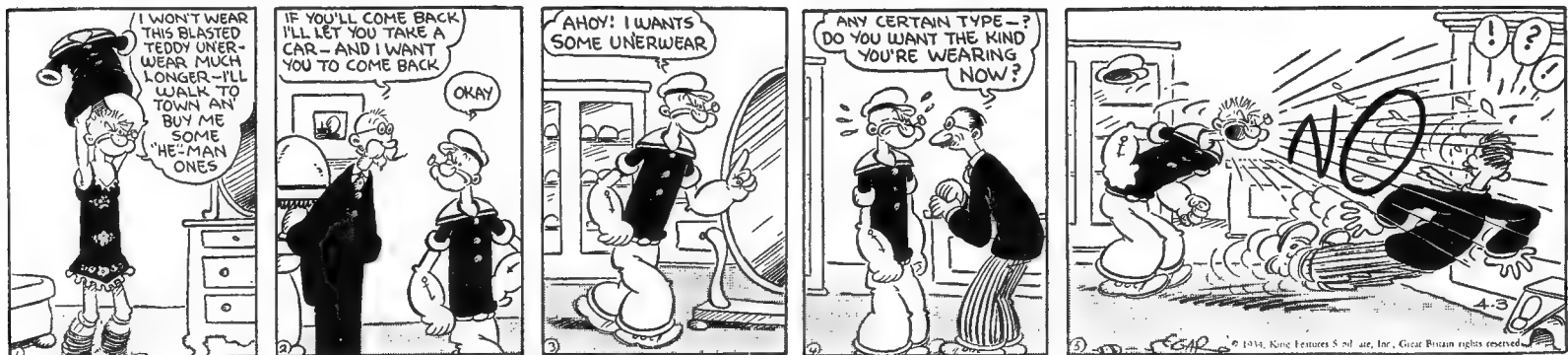
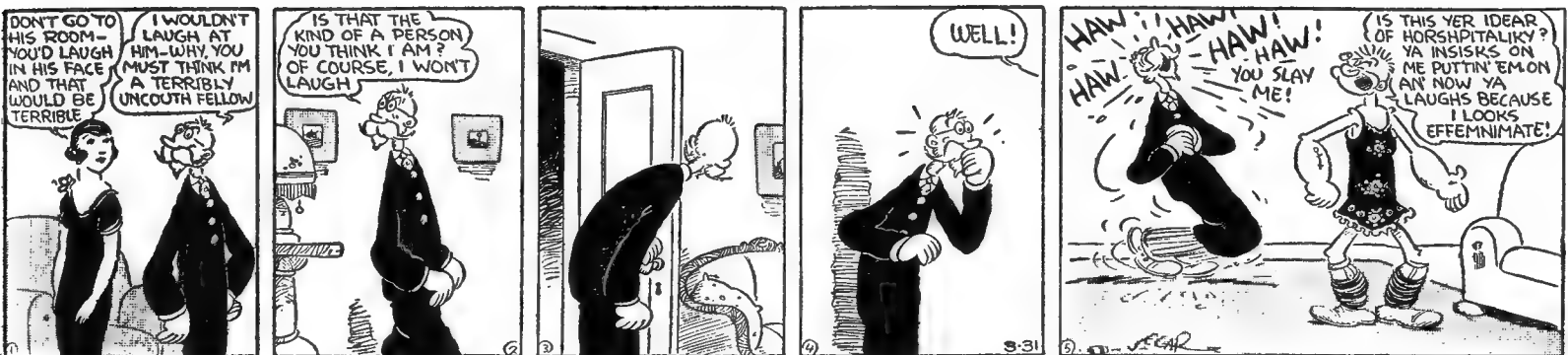
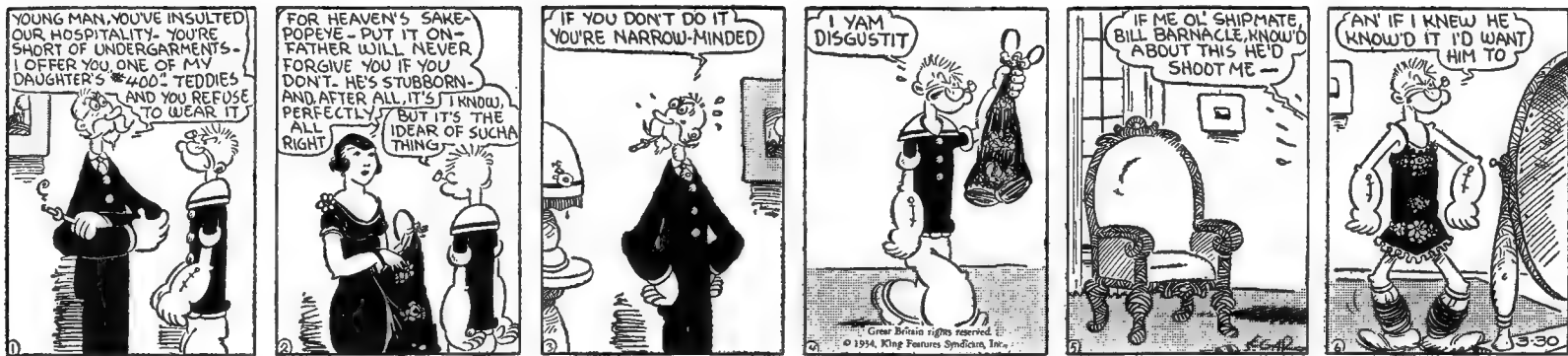


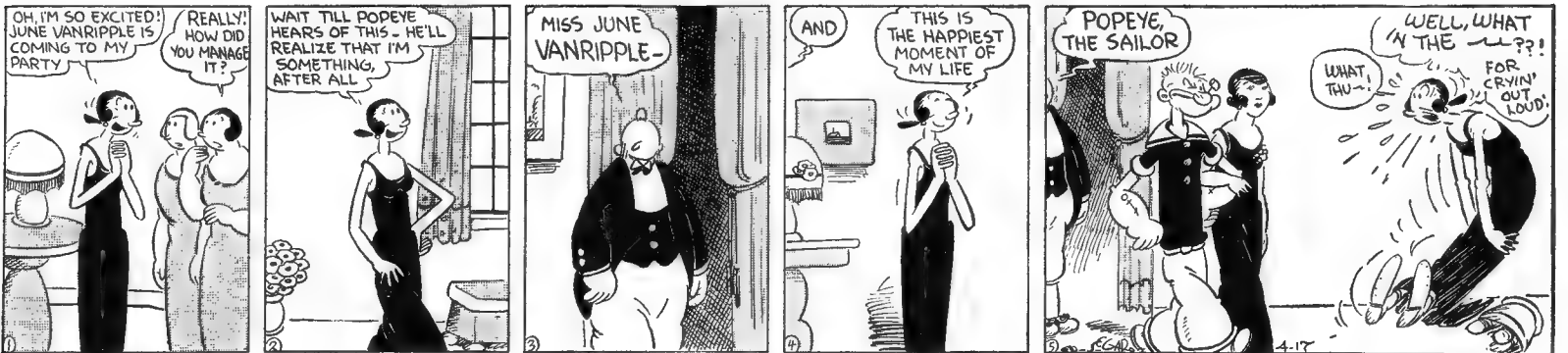
CHAPTER IV: A POWER IN SOCIETY













CHAPTER V:
WIMPY, BIG RUBBER MAN

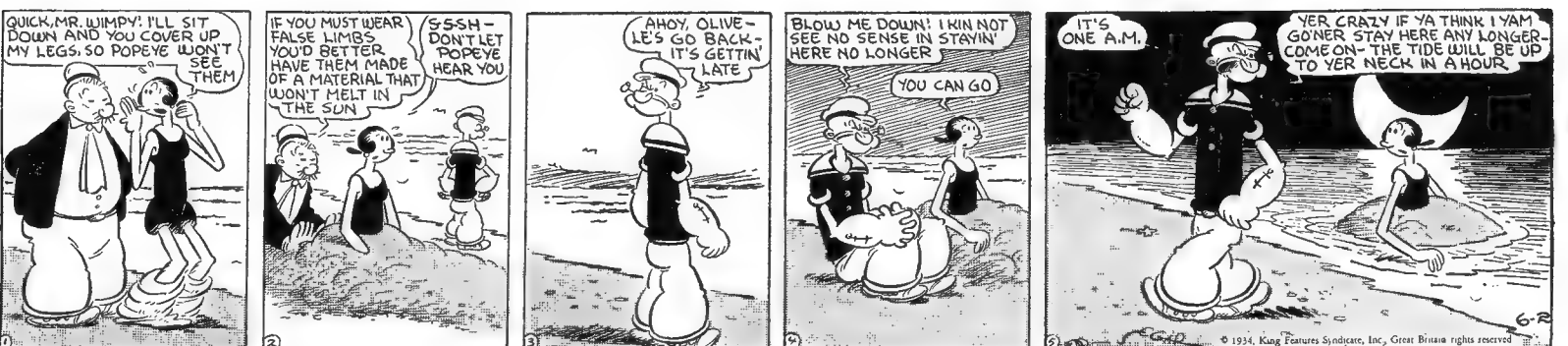
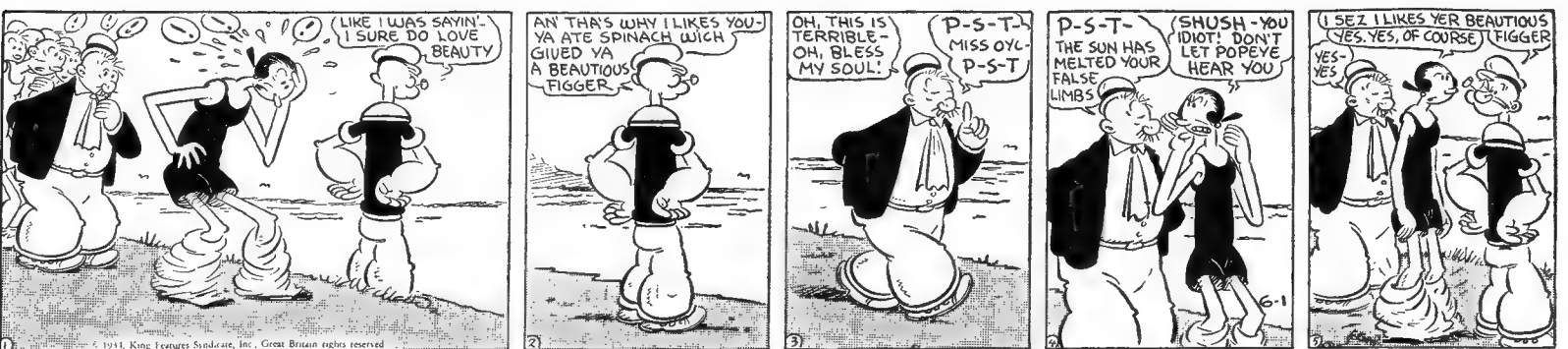
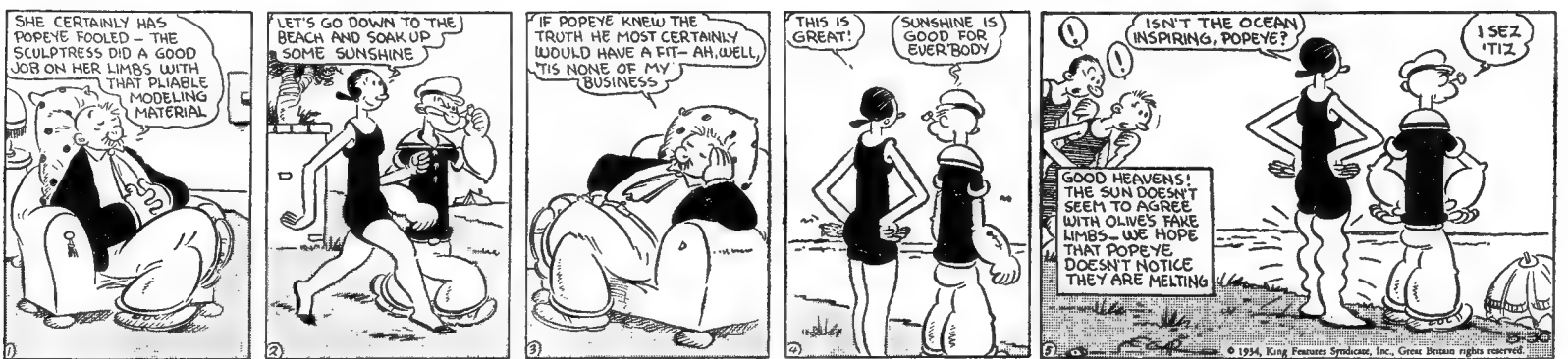


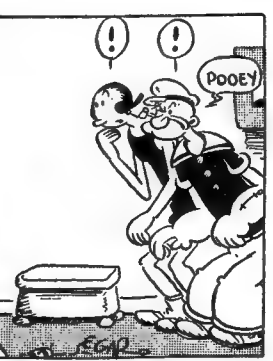
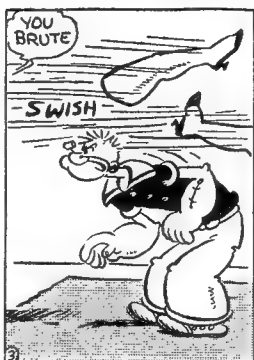
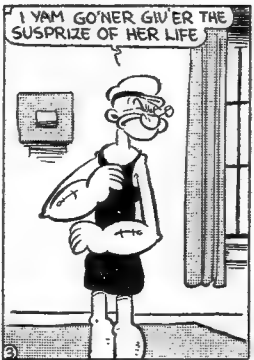
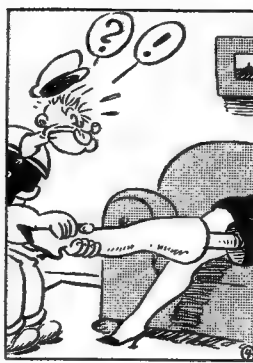
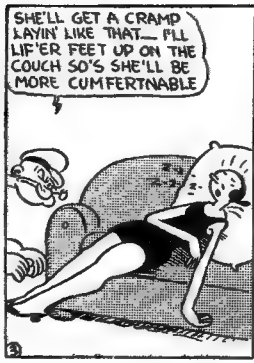


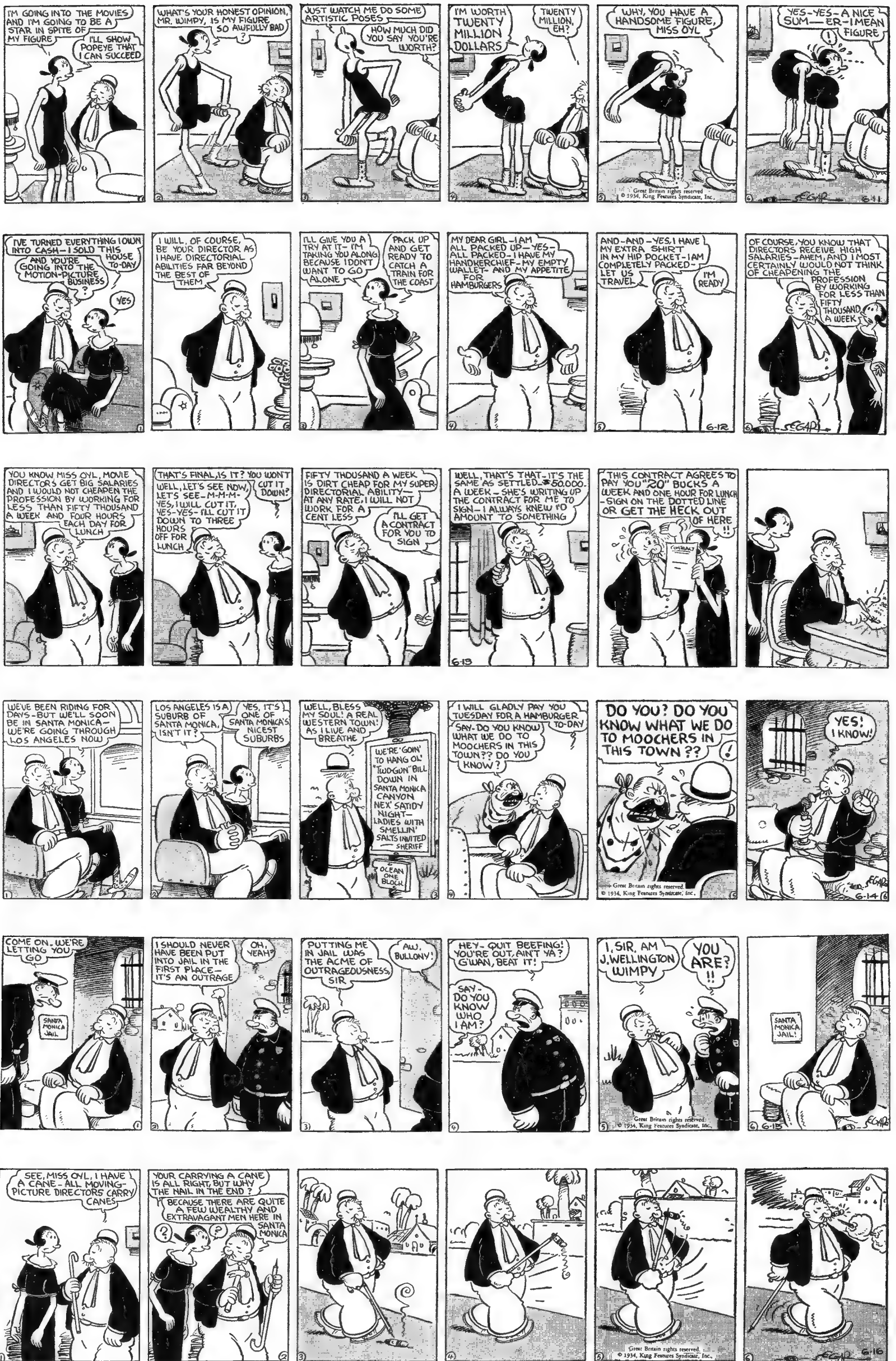


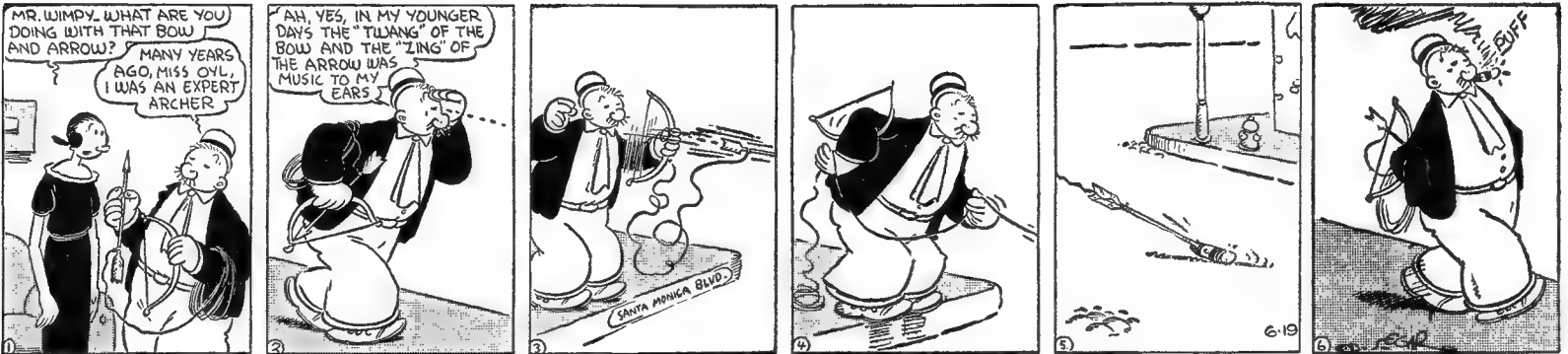
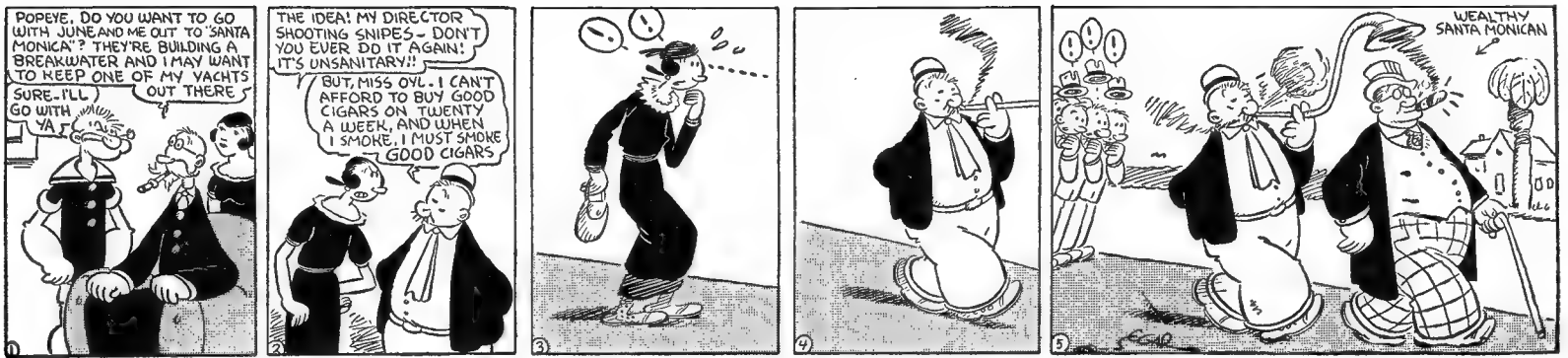
CHAPTER VI: GETTING A LEG UP





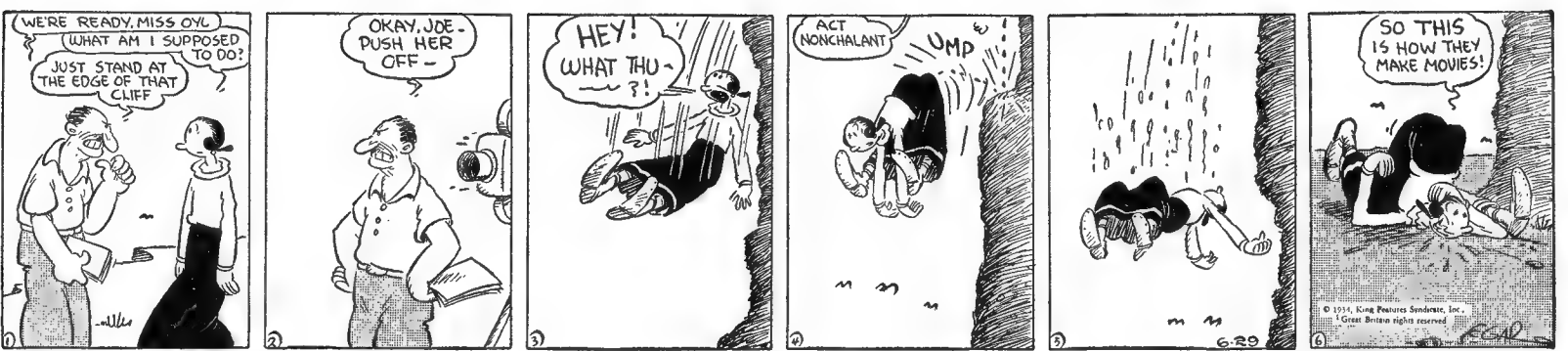
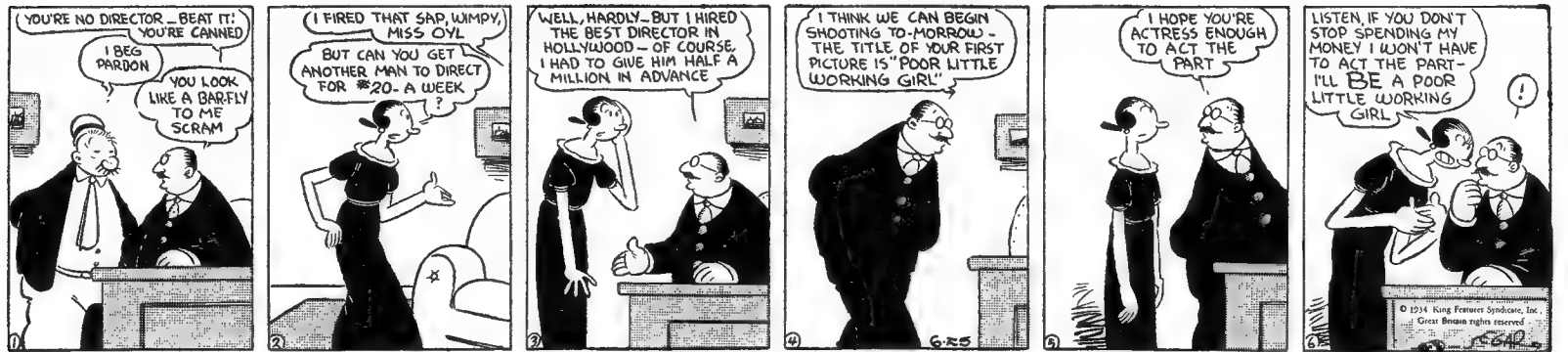
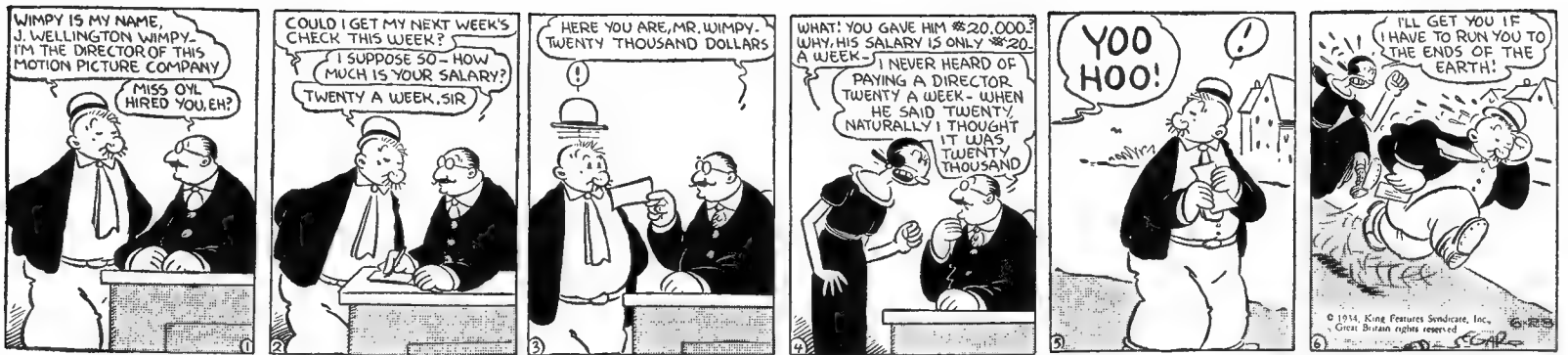






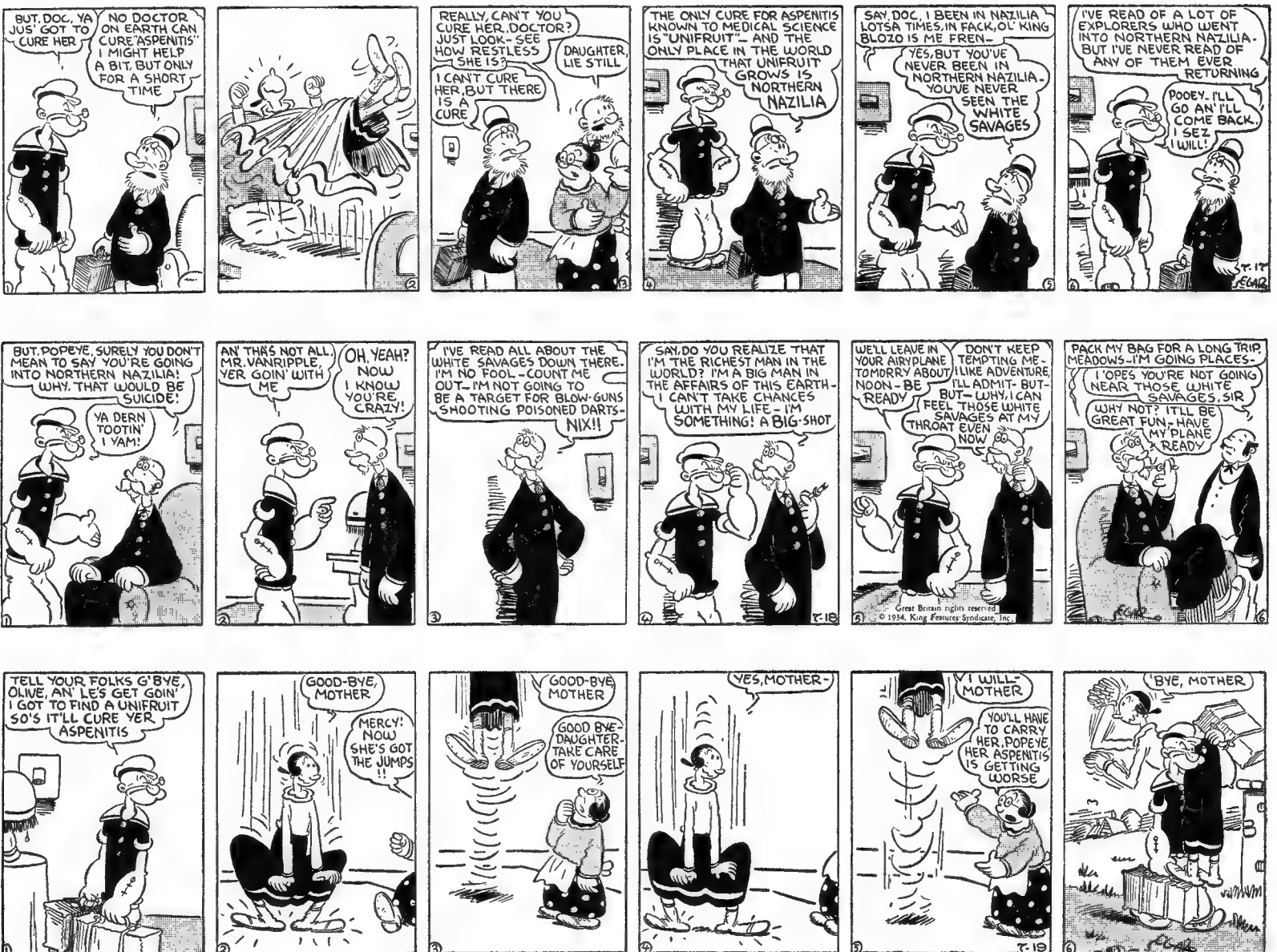
CHAPTER VII: CHRONIC ASPENITIS

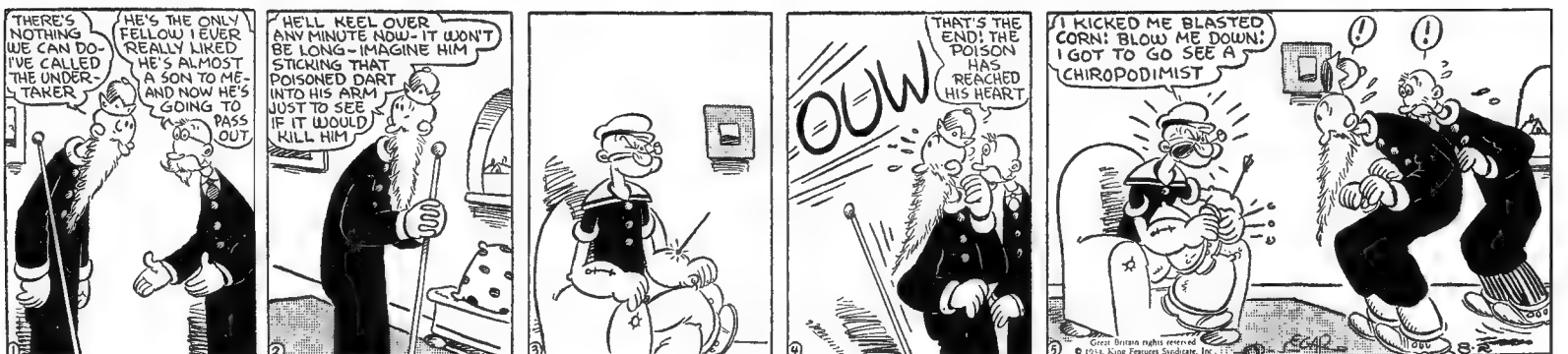
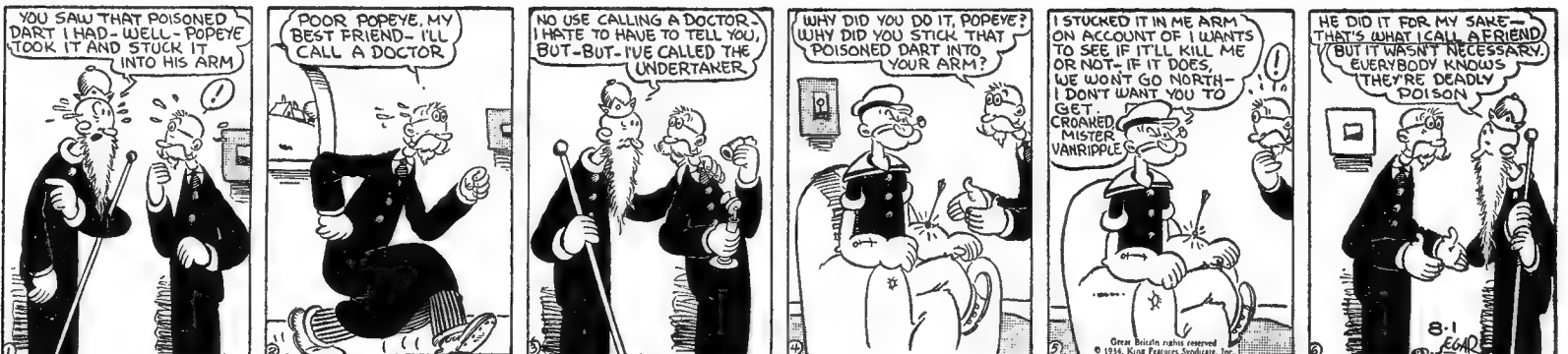
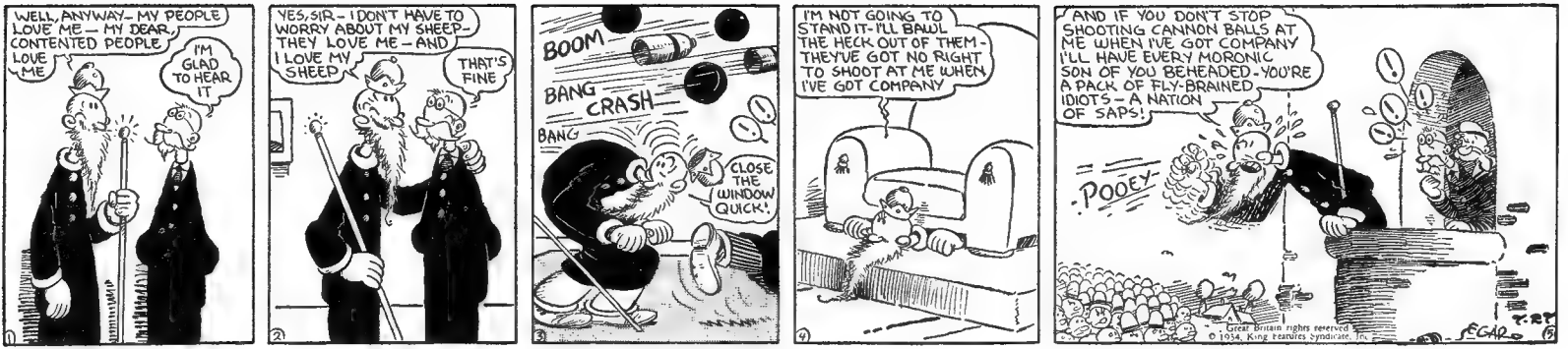


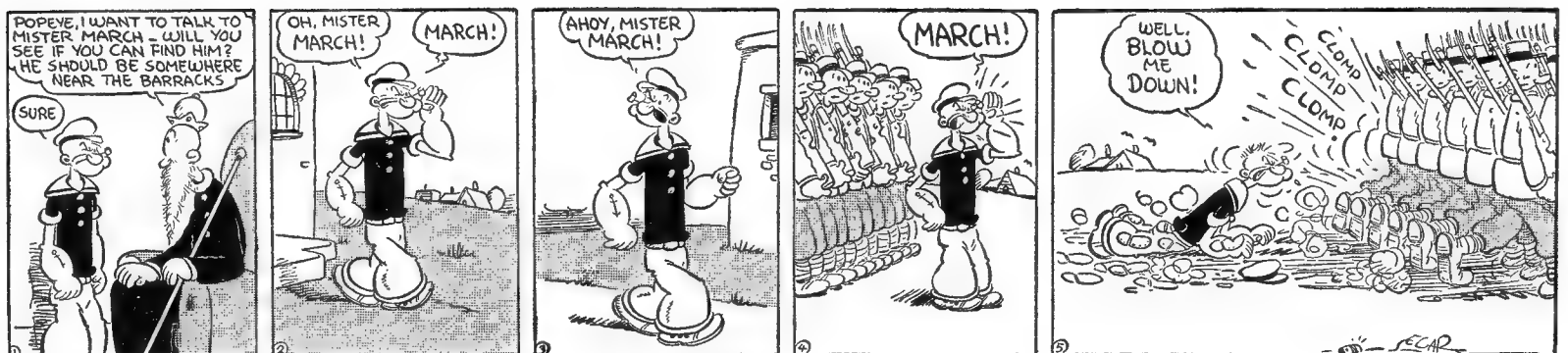
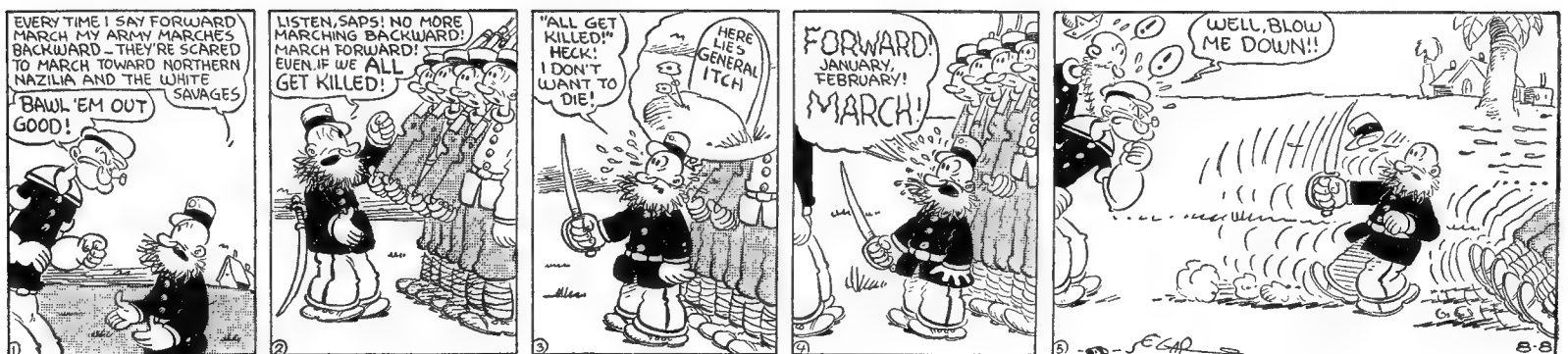


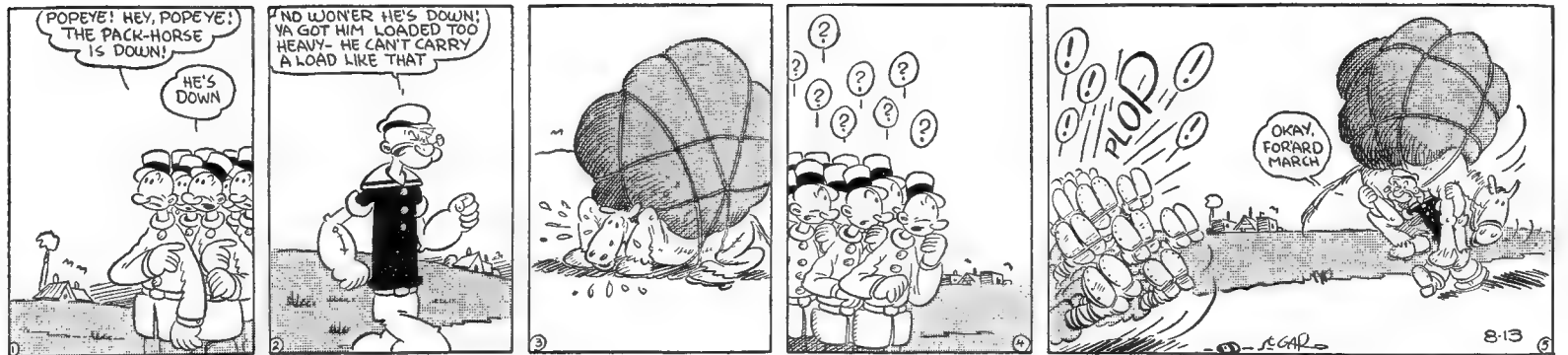
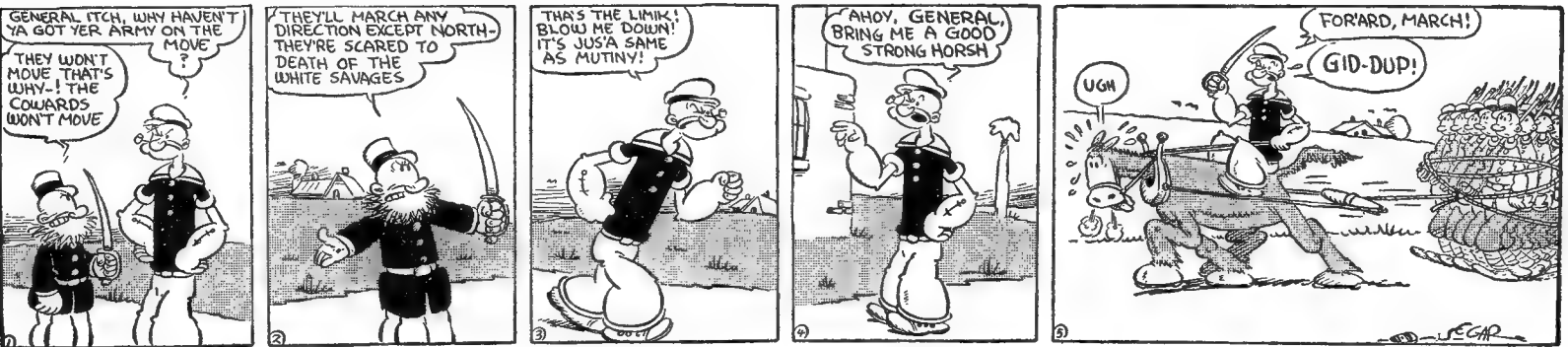


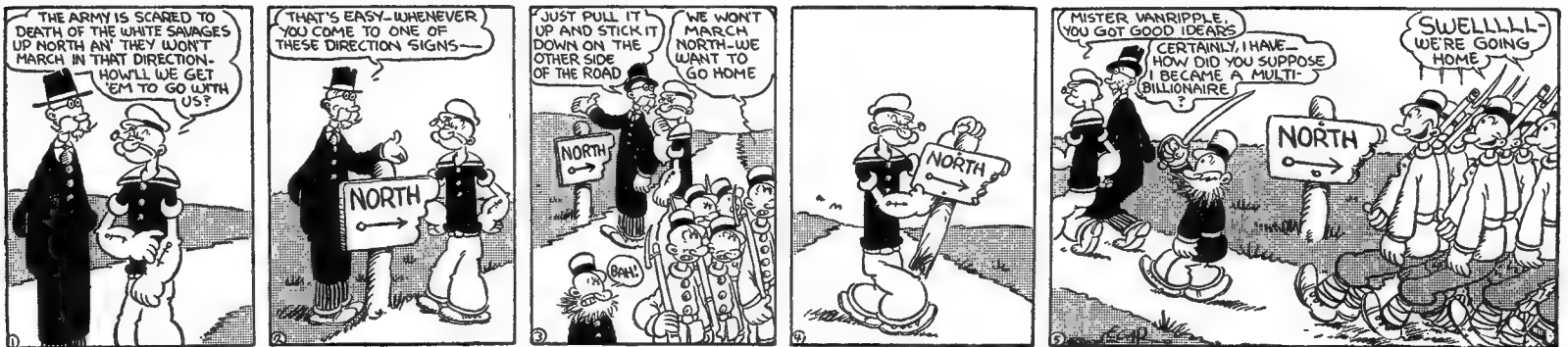
CHAPTER VIII: WHITE SAVAGES



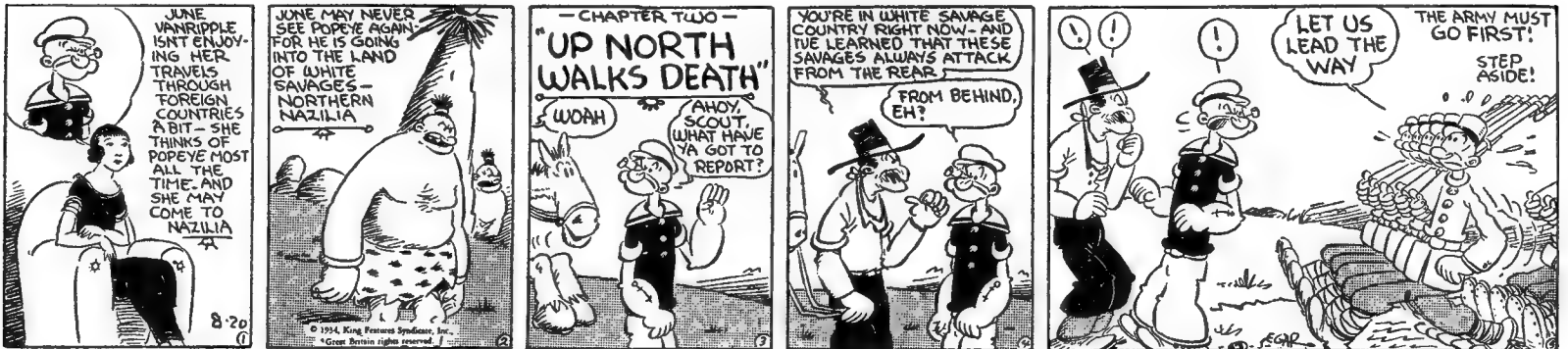


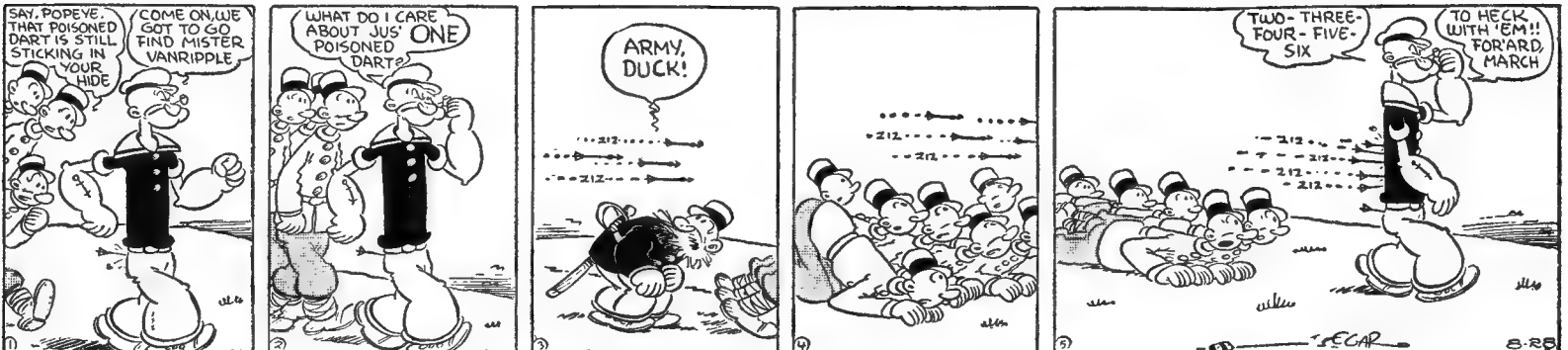
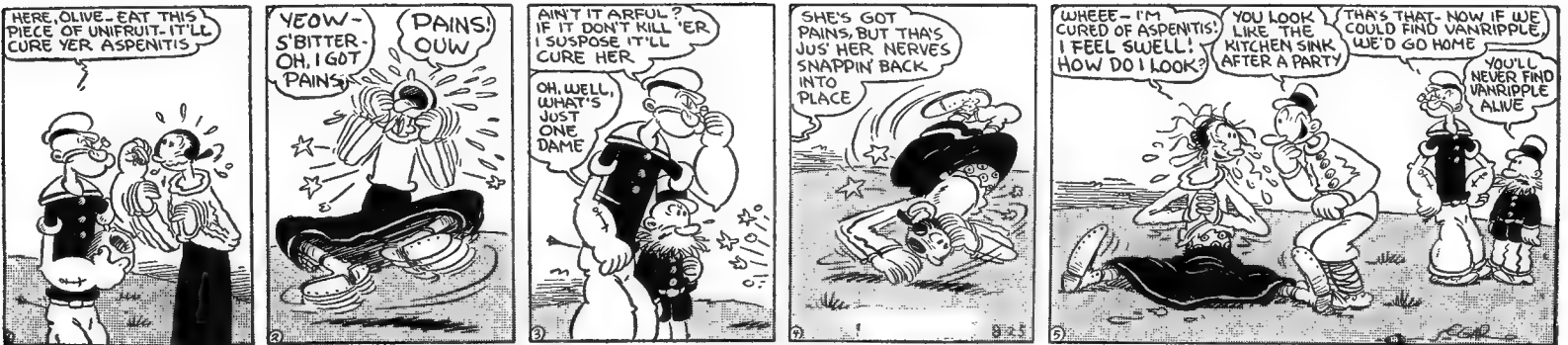
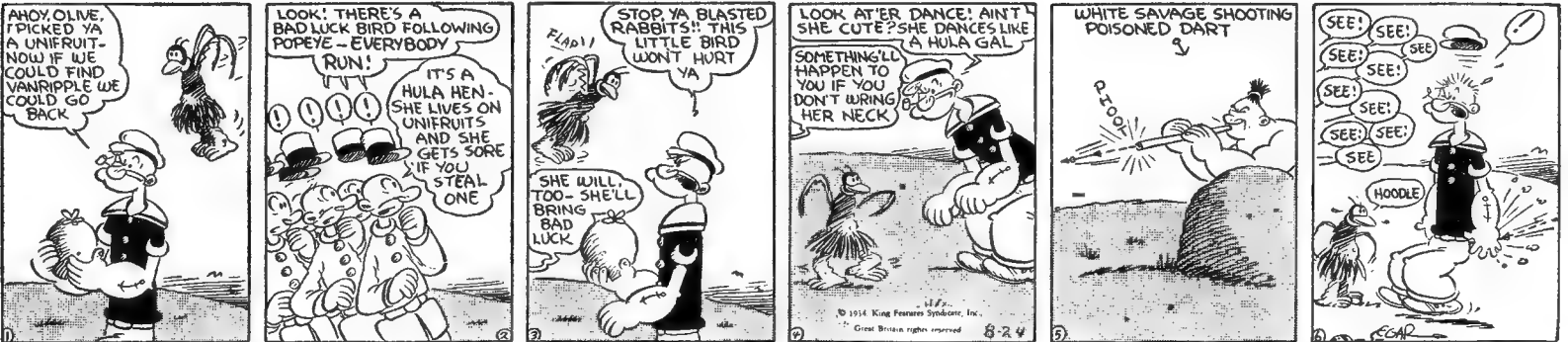
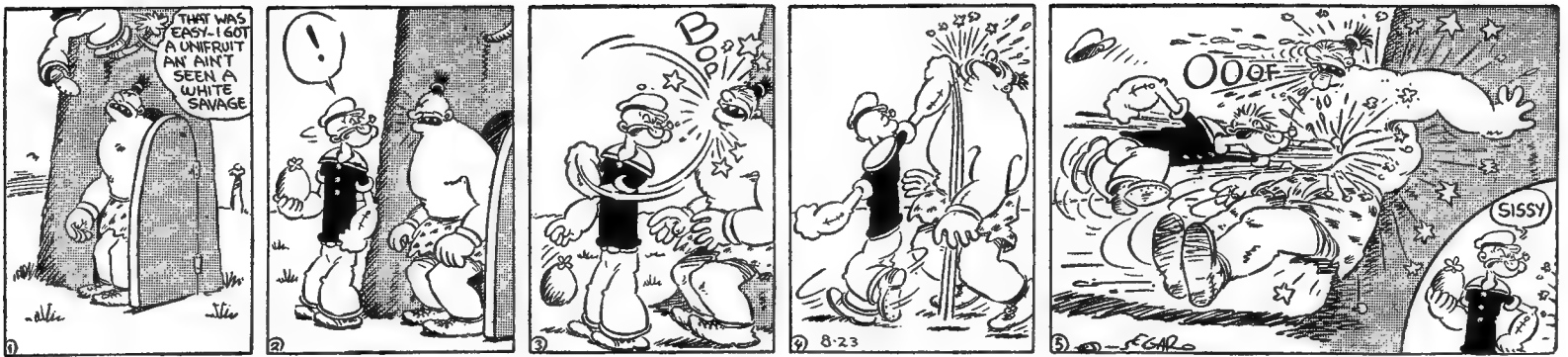


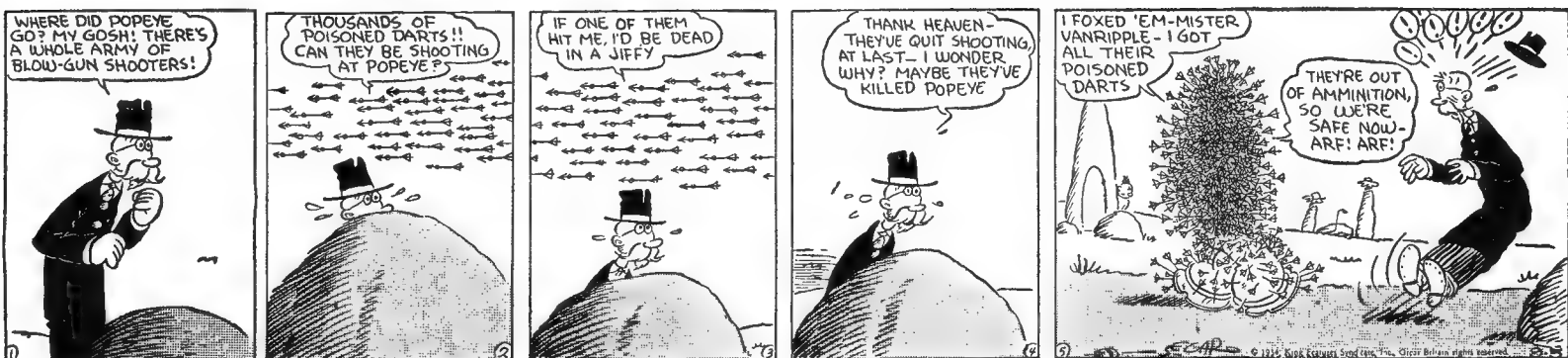
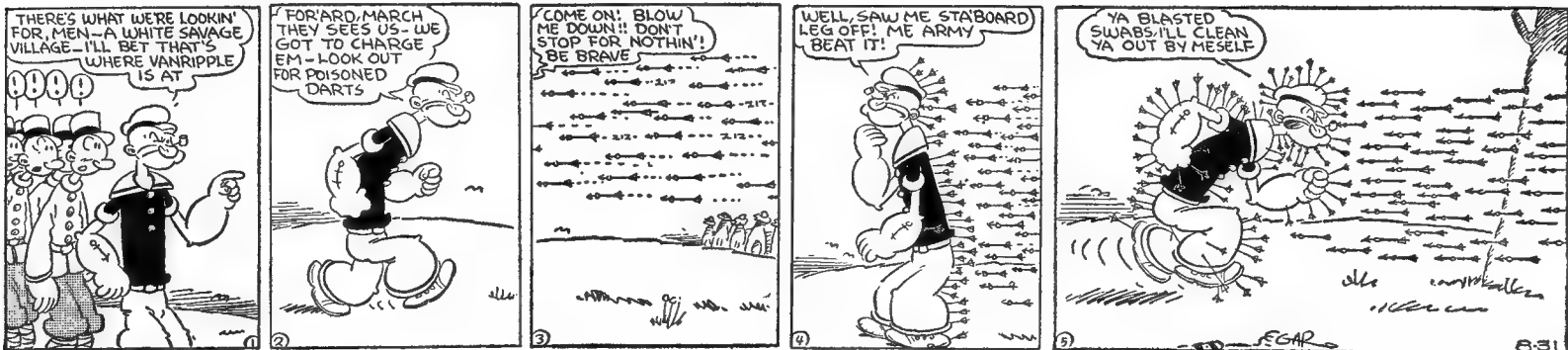


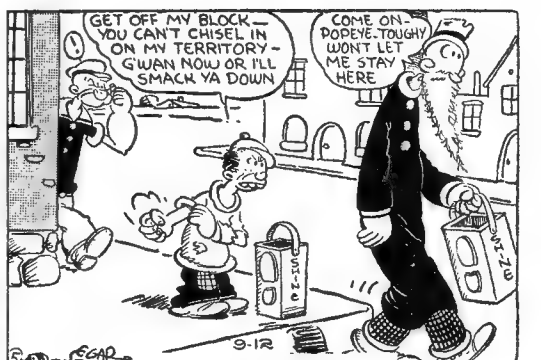
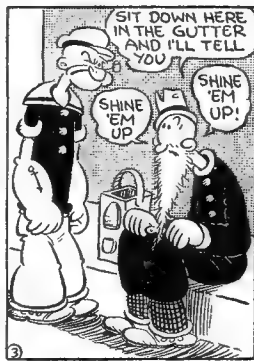
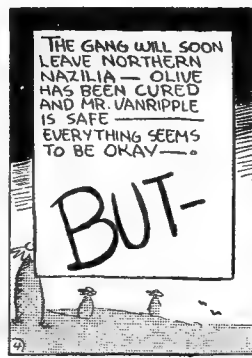
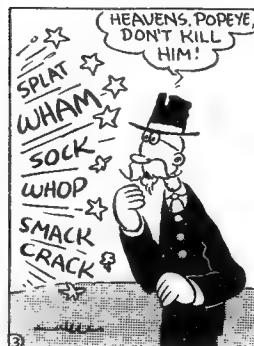
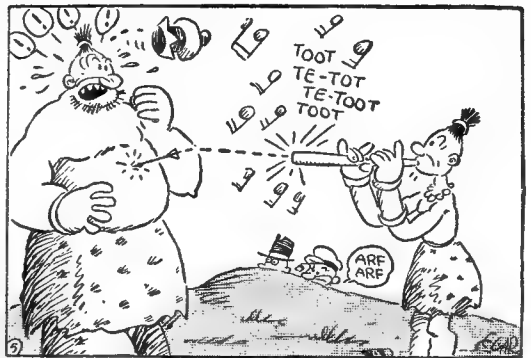
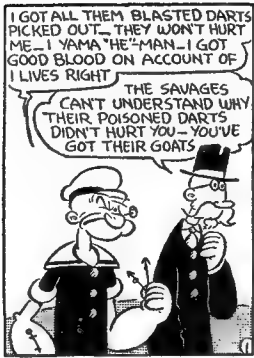


CHAPTER IX: UP NORTH WALKS DEATH

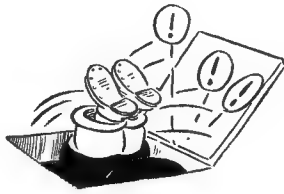




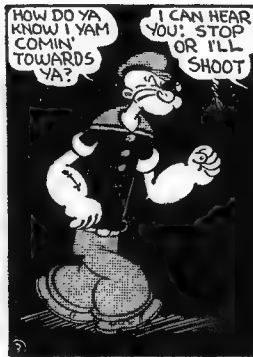
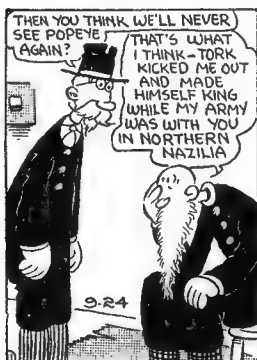
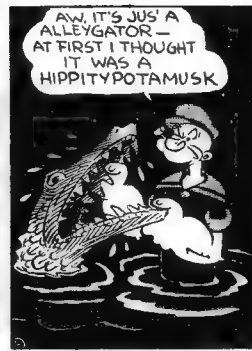
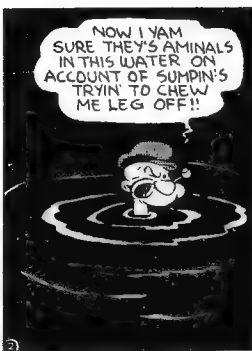
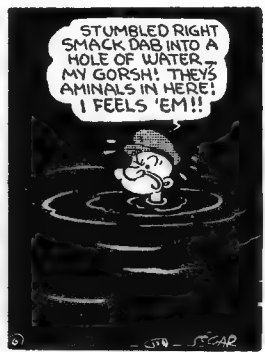
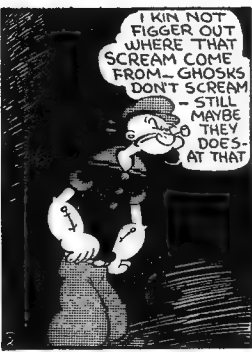






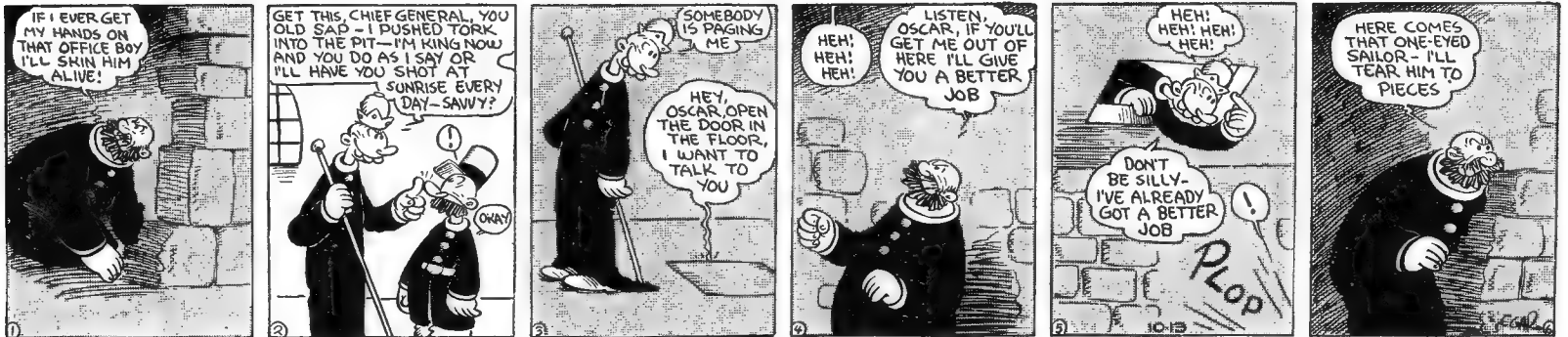
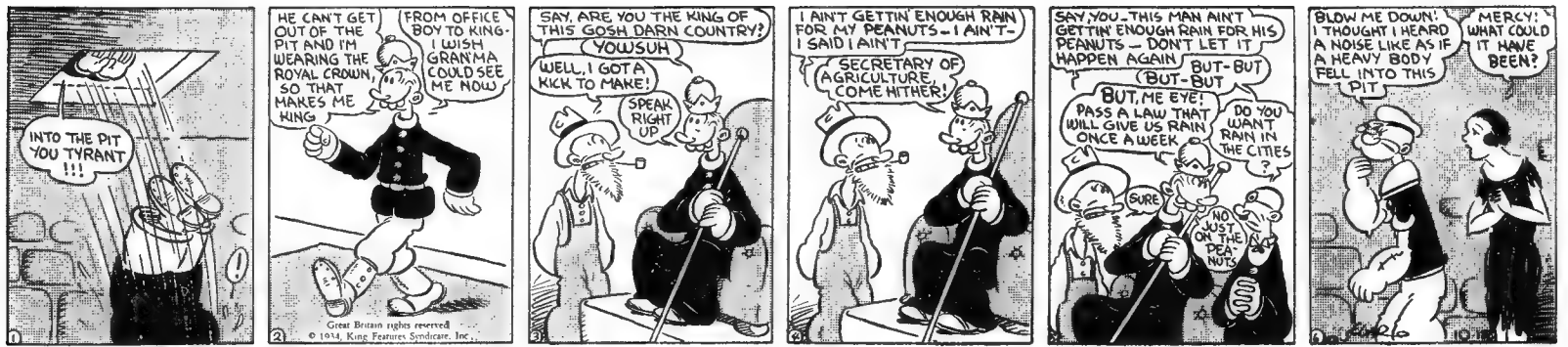
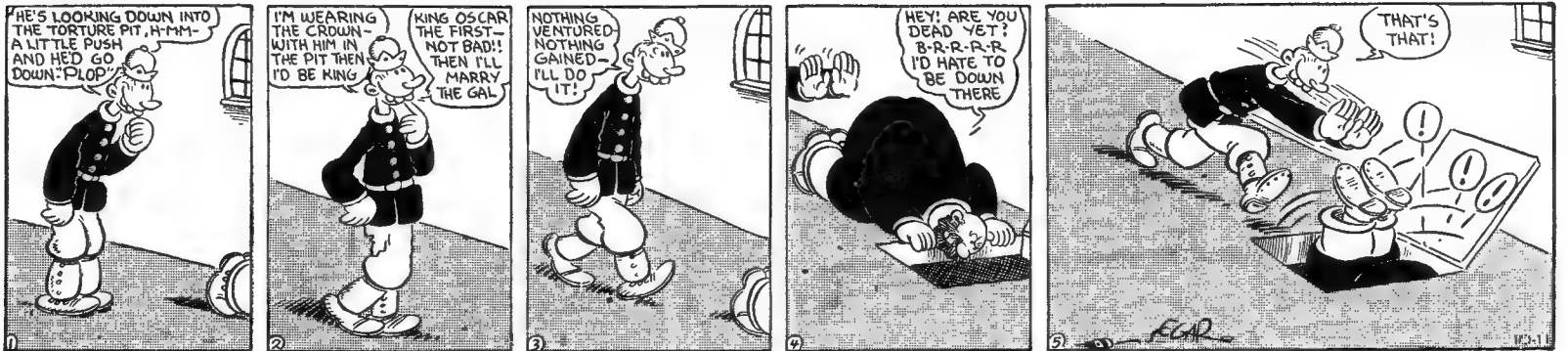


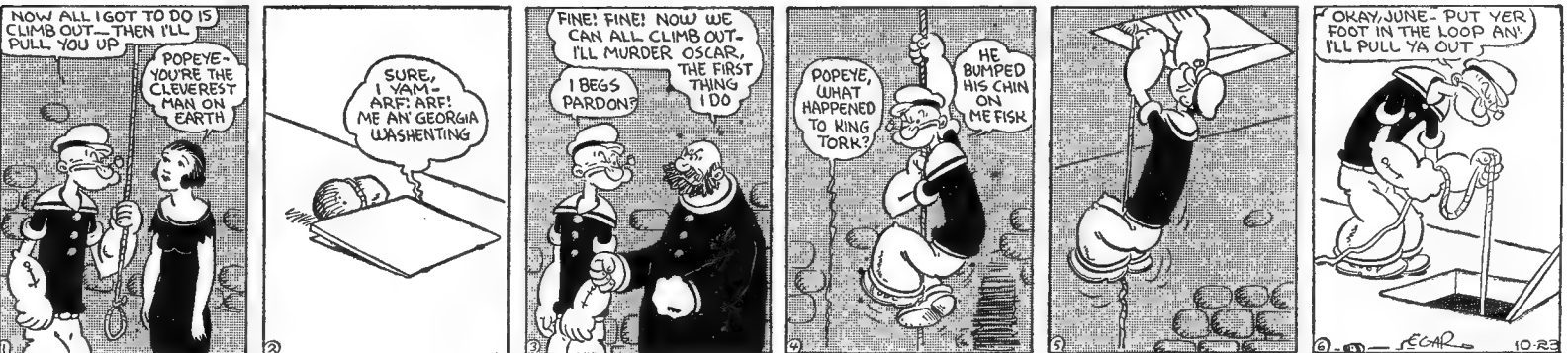
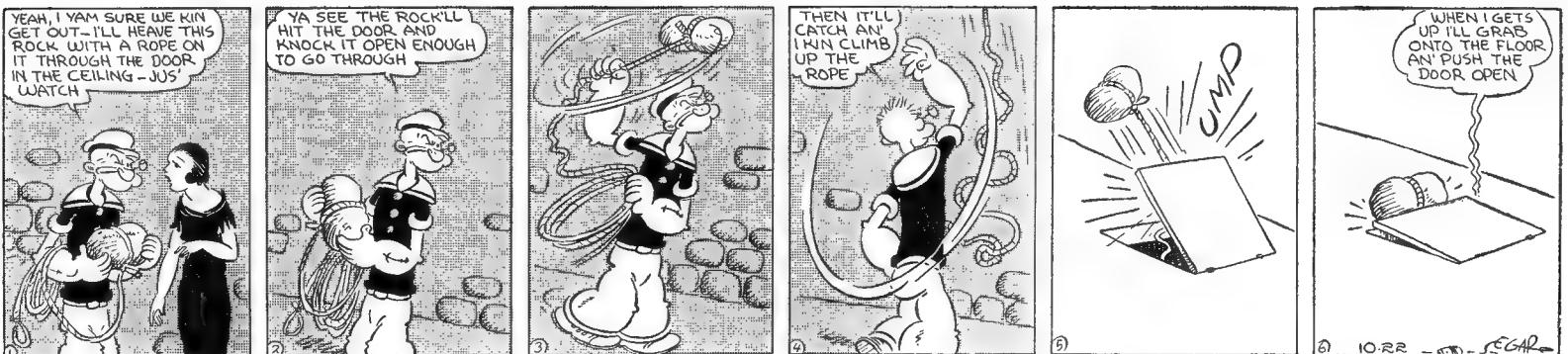
CHAPTER X:
WELL MET IN THE PIT

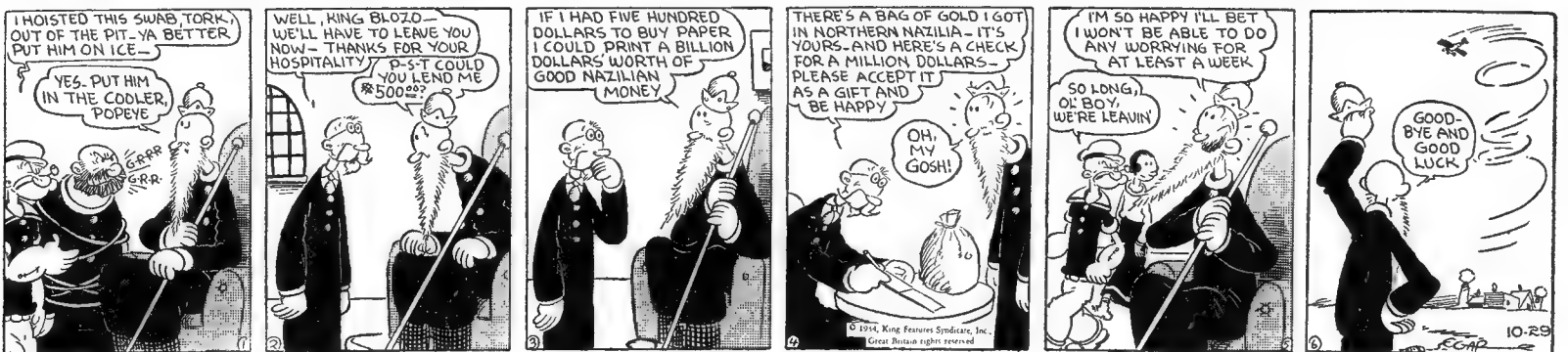
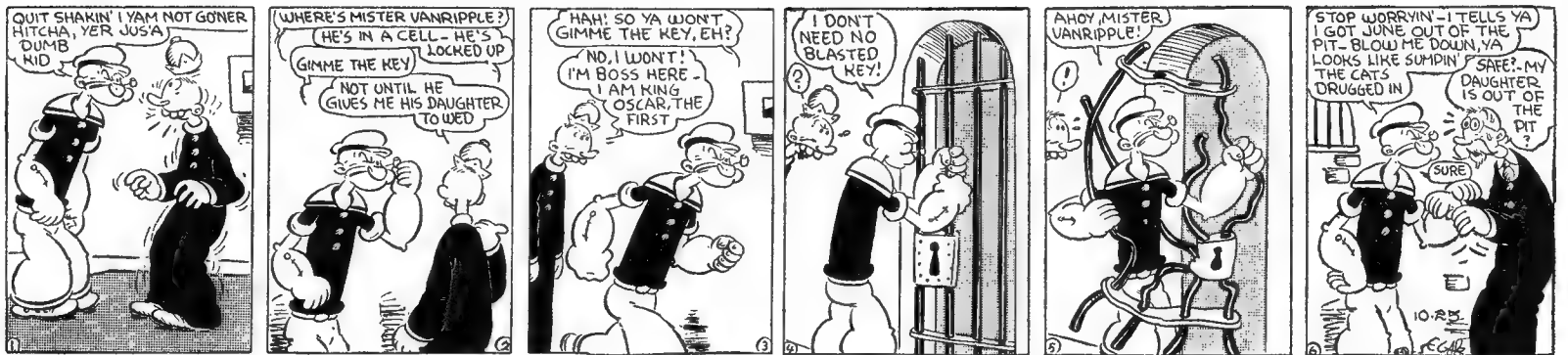
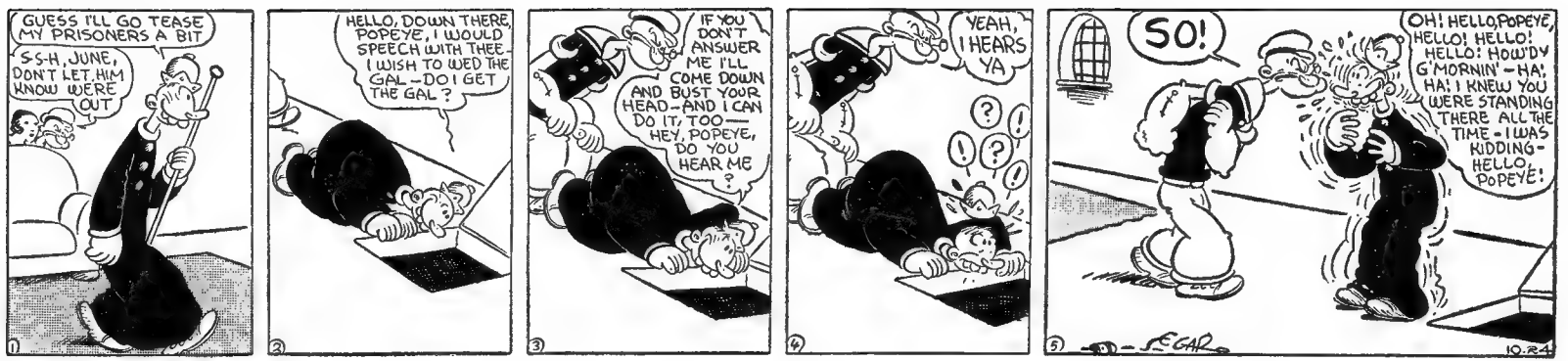


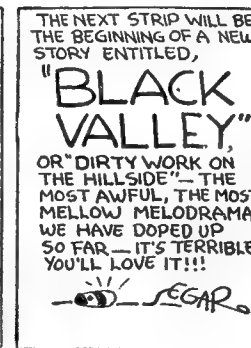
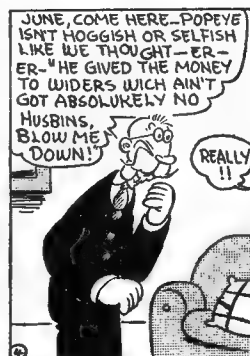
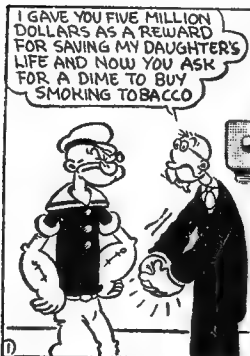
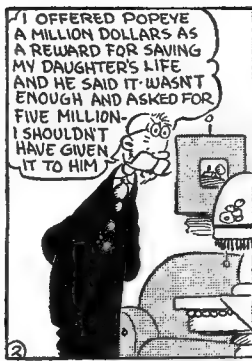




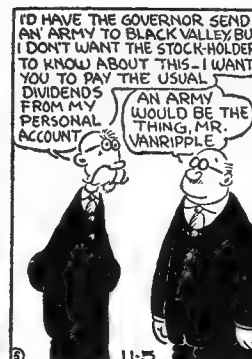
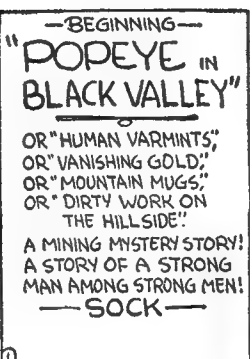


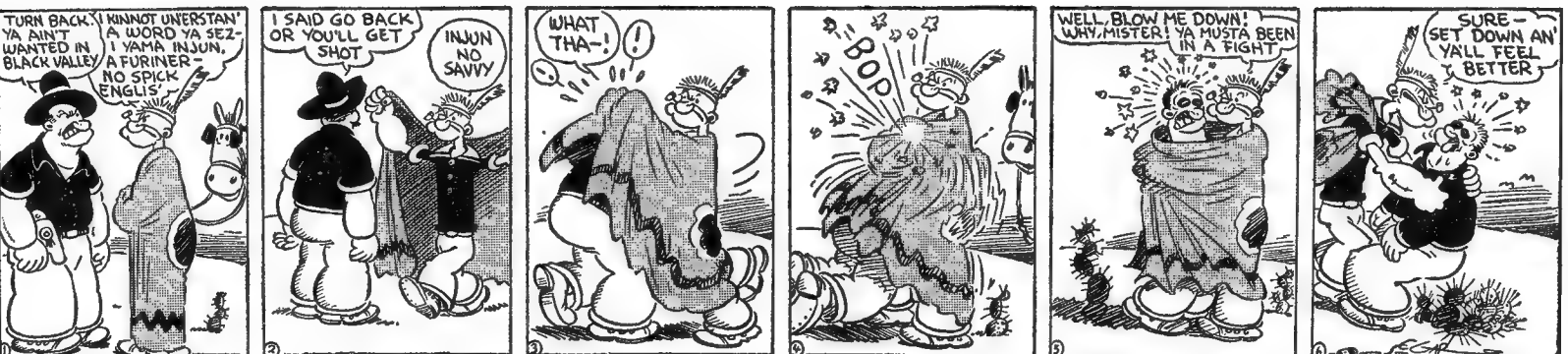
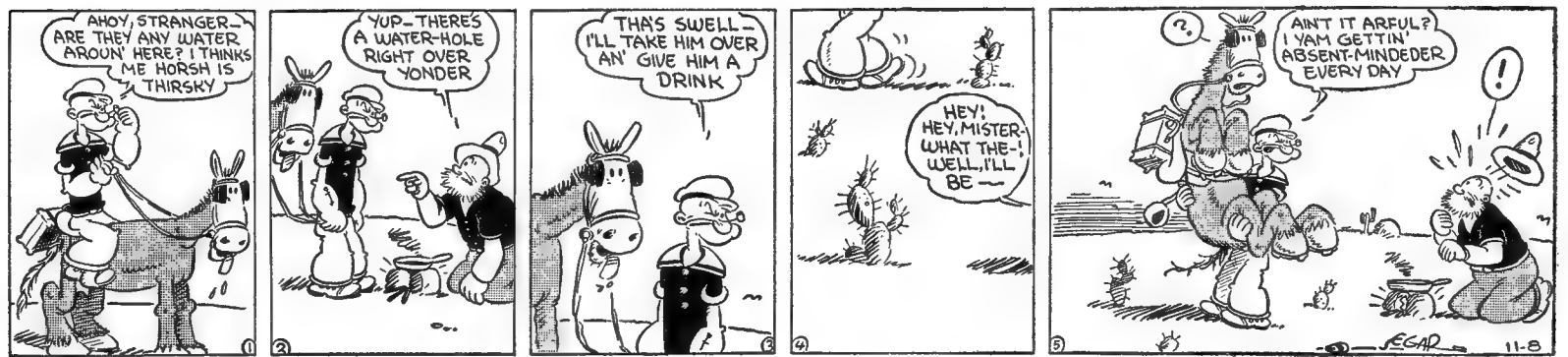
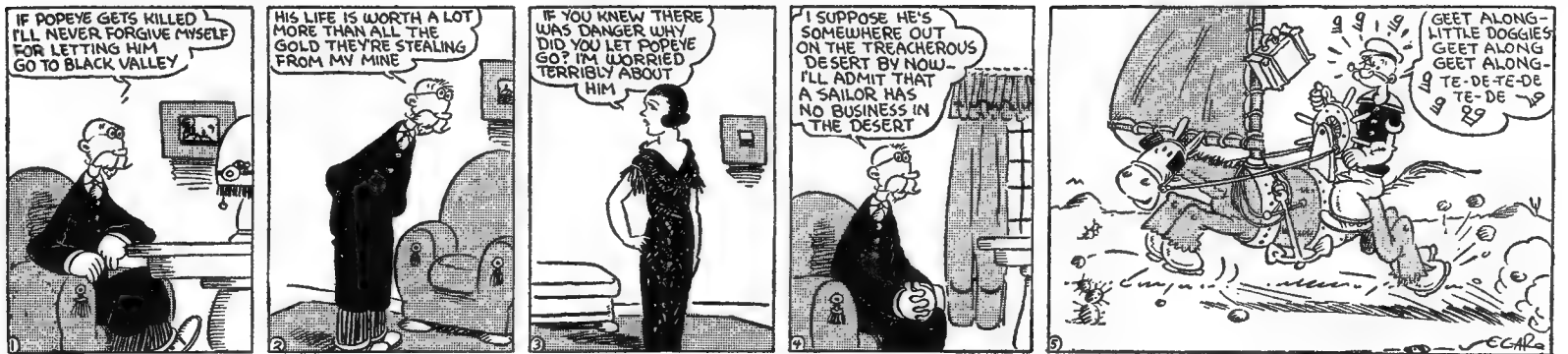
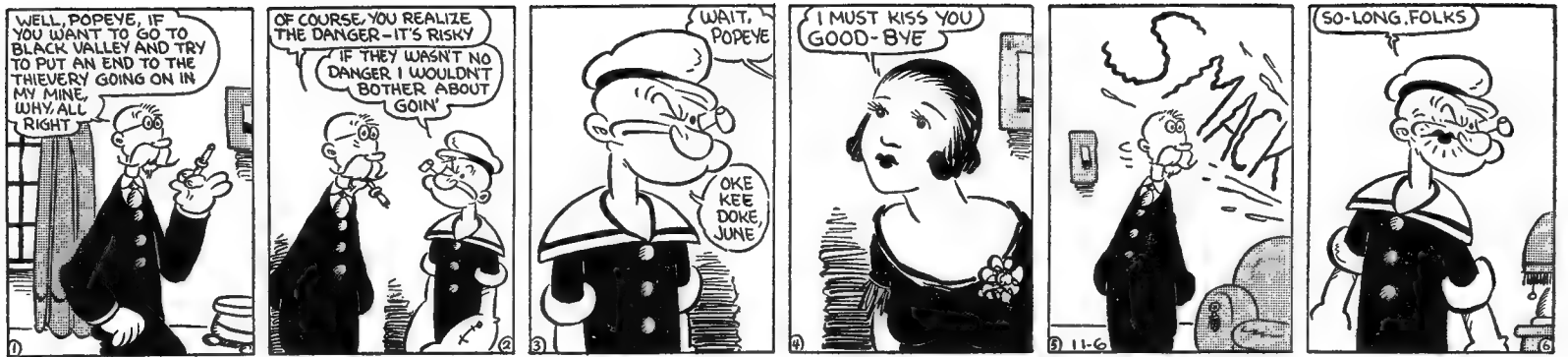


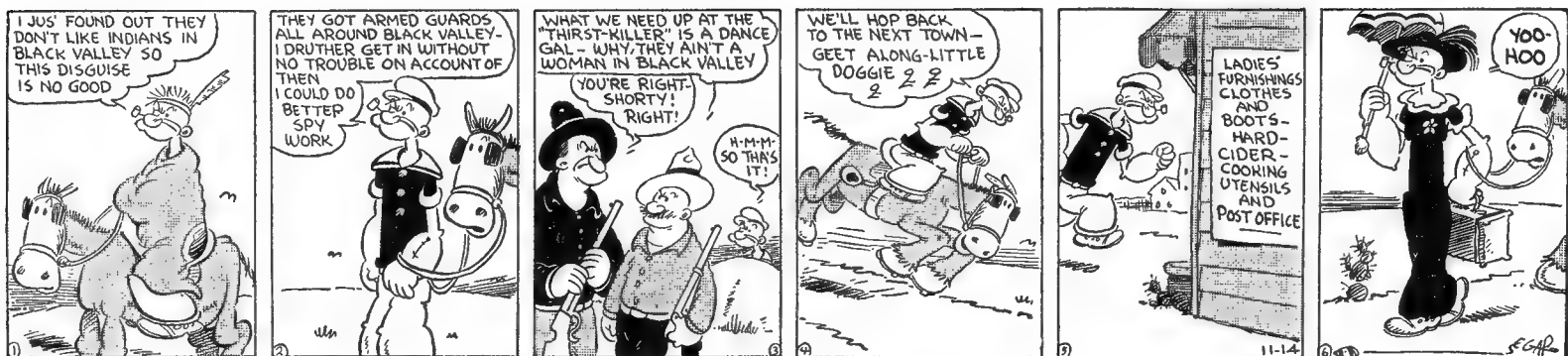
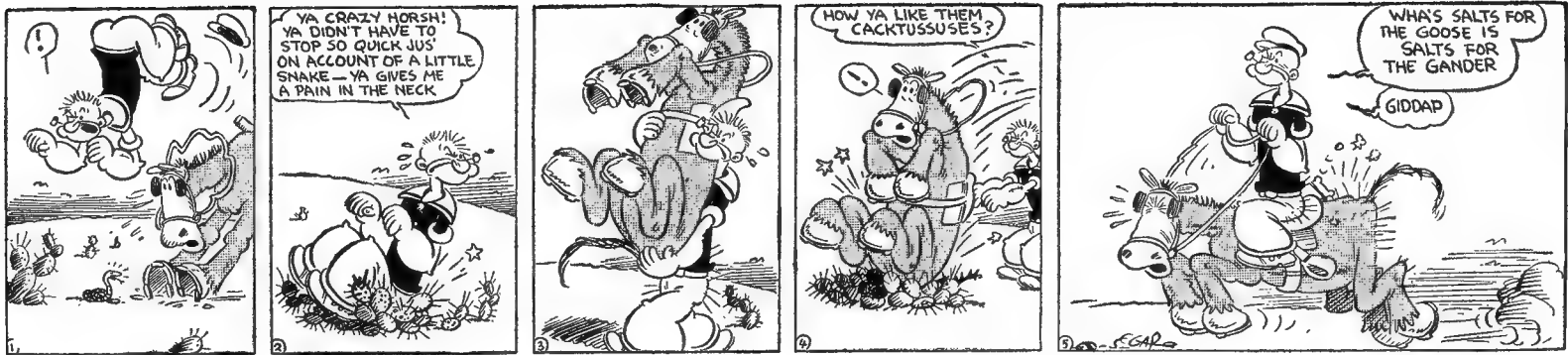


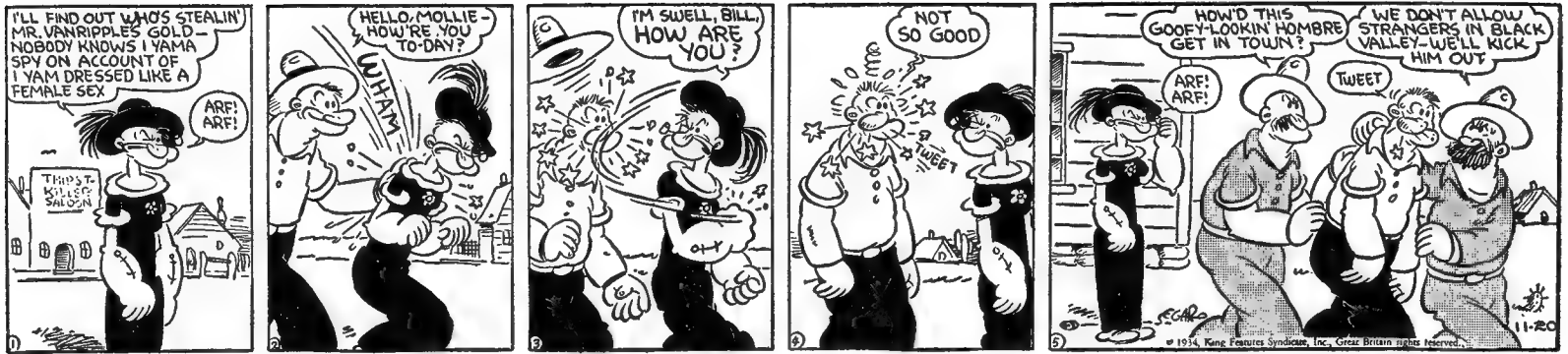


CHAPTER XI: BLACK VALLEY

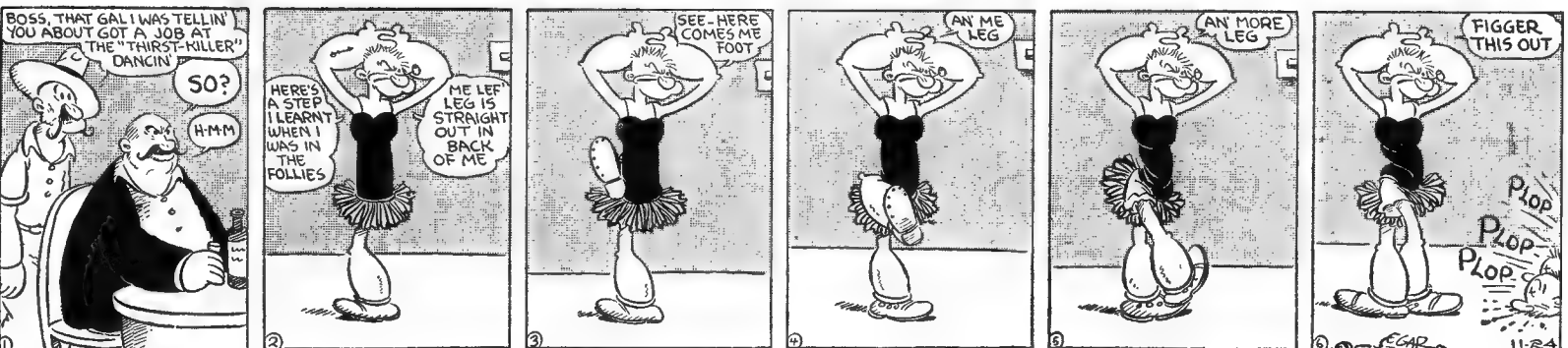
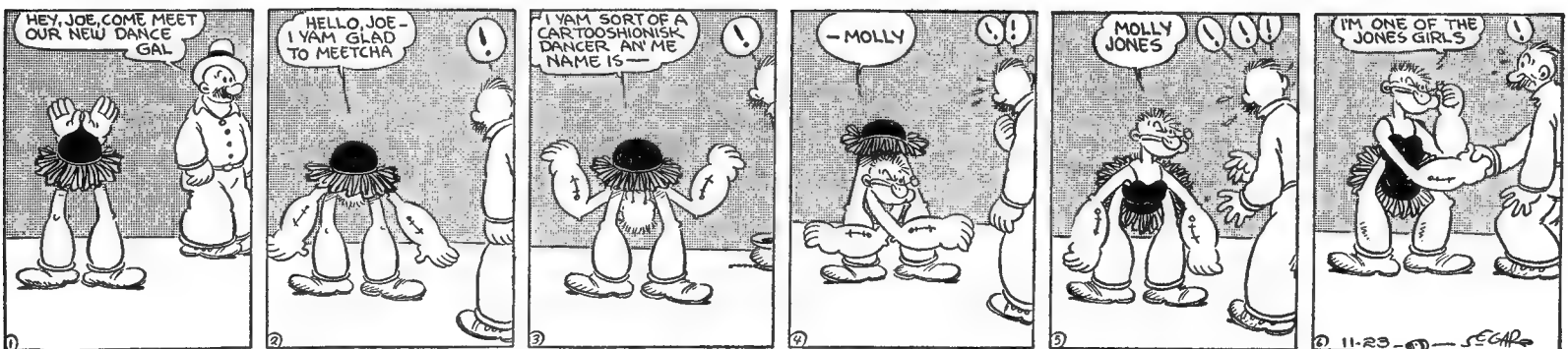
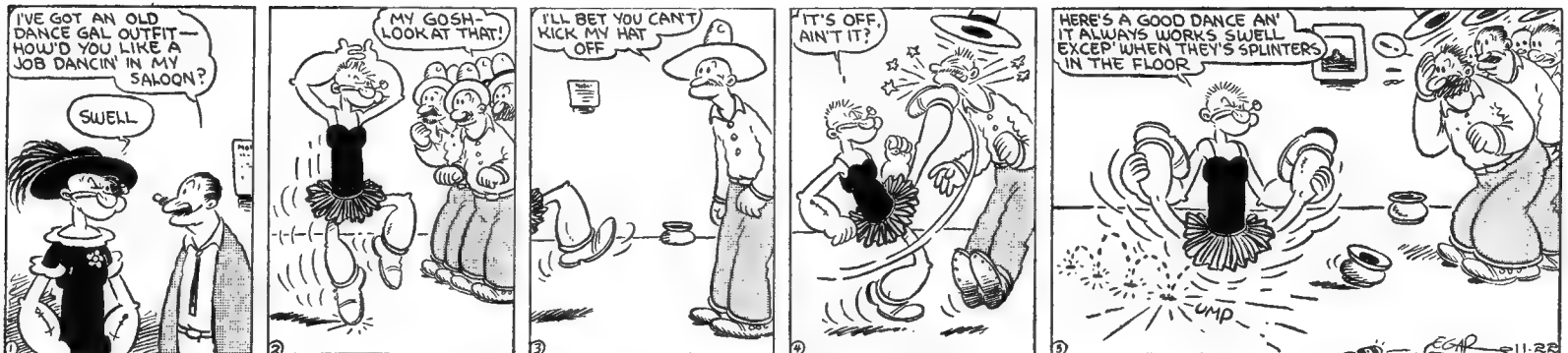


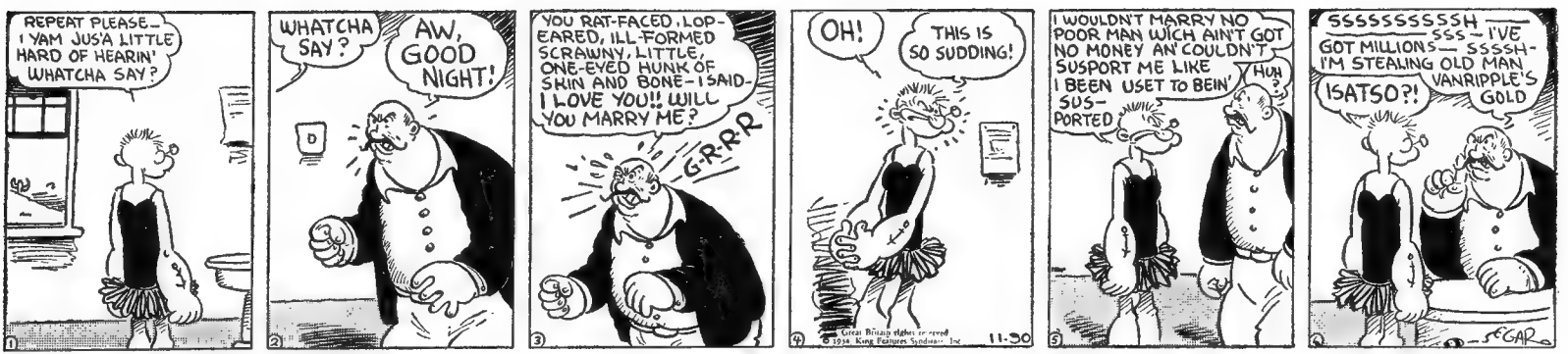
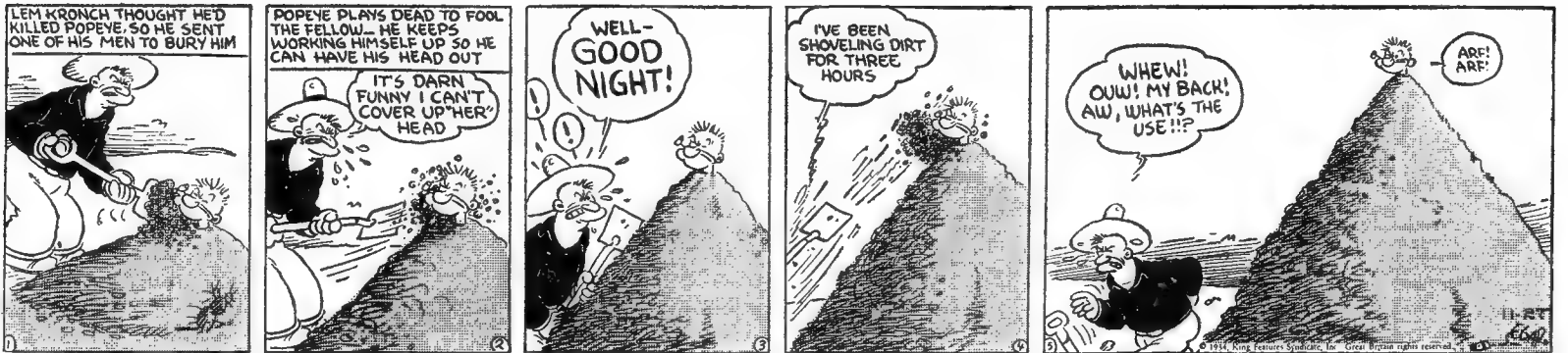
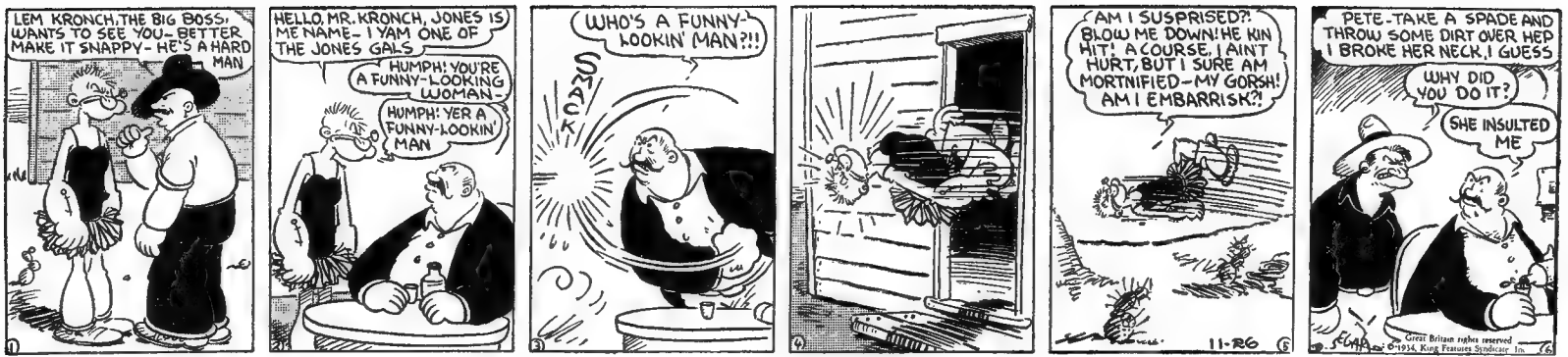


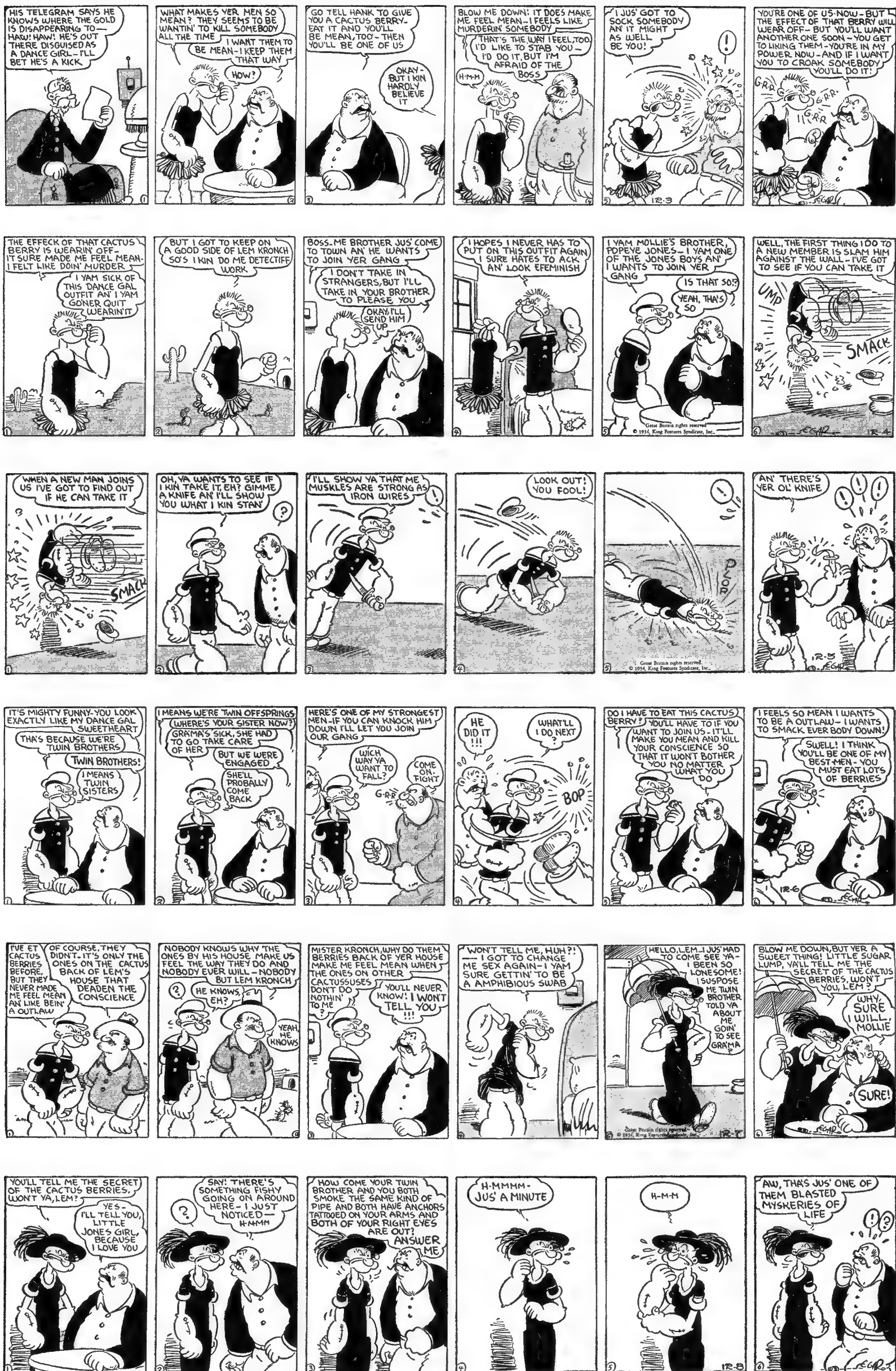


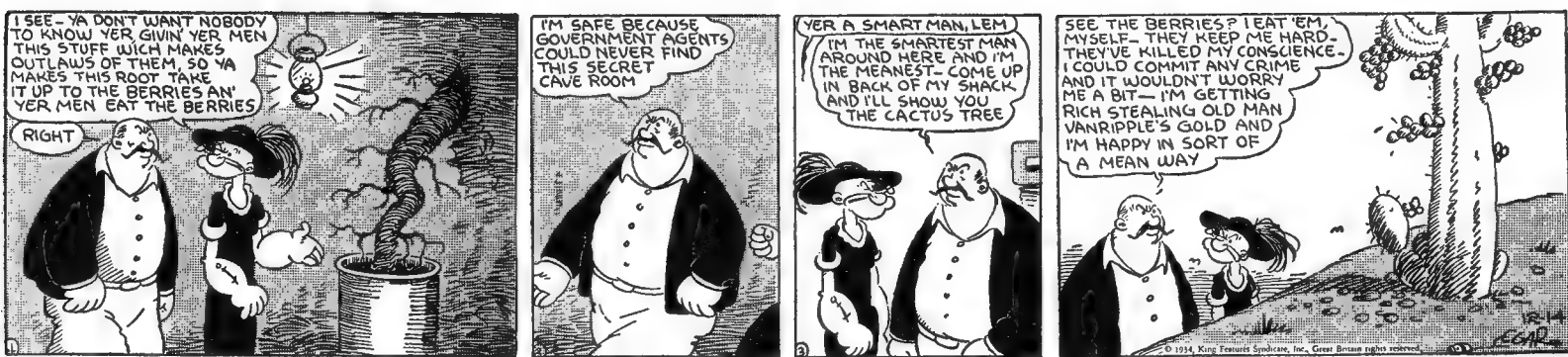
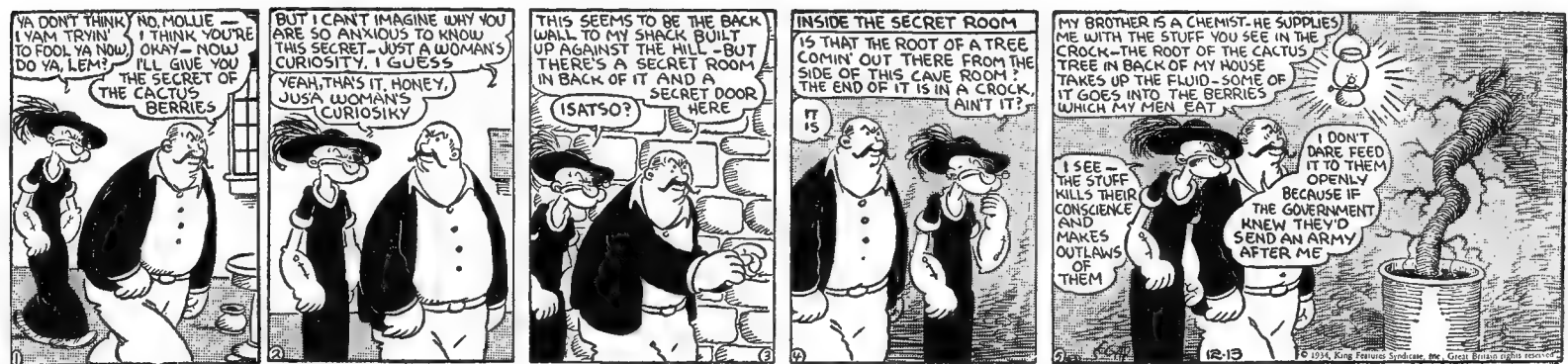


CHAPTER XII: A AMPHIBIOUS SWAB



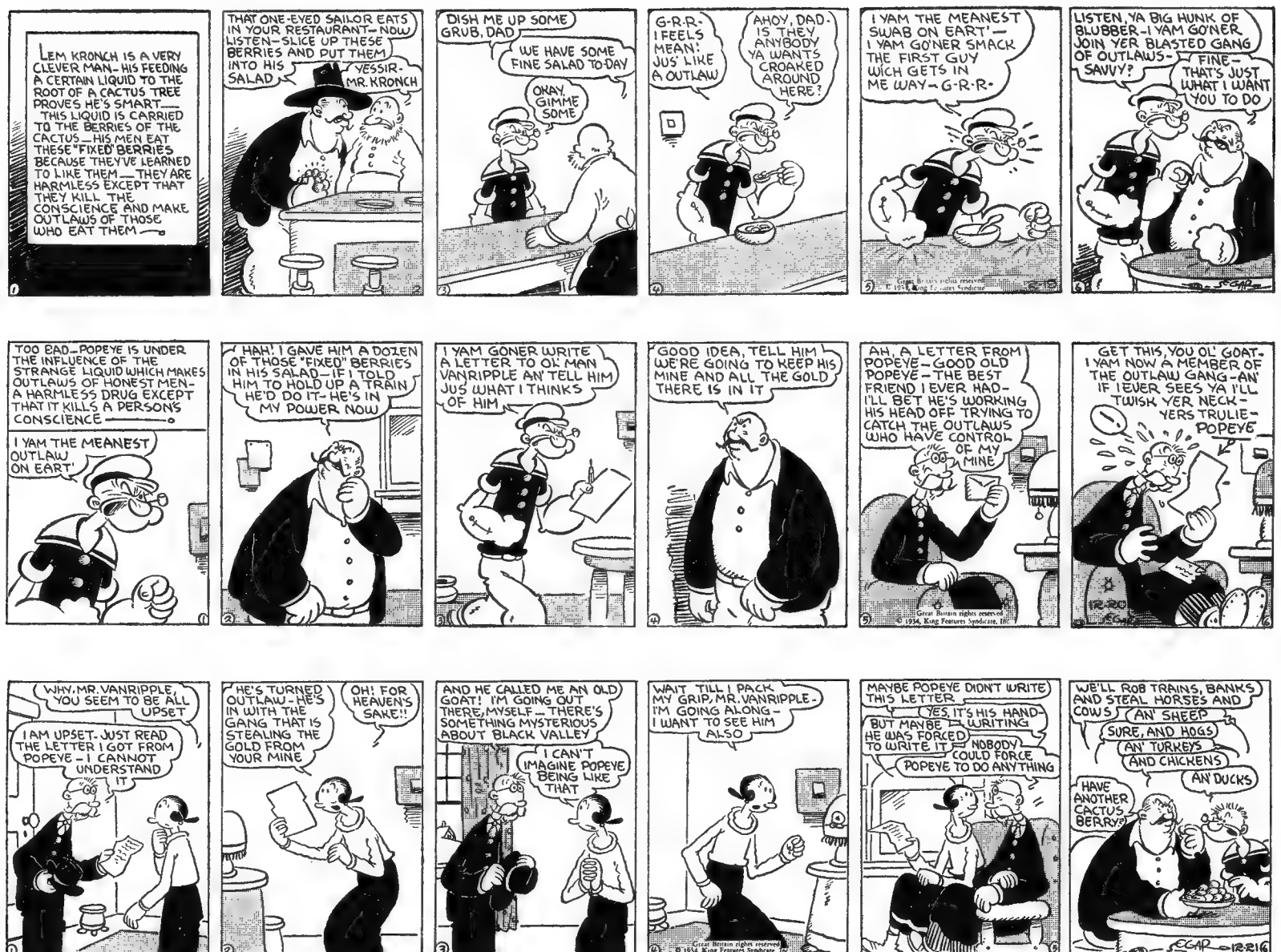








CHAPTER XIII: A BROTHER'S RETURN

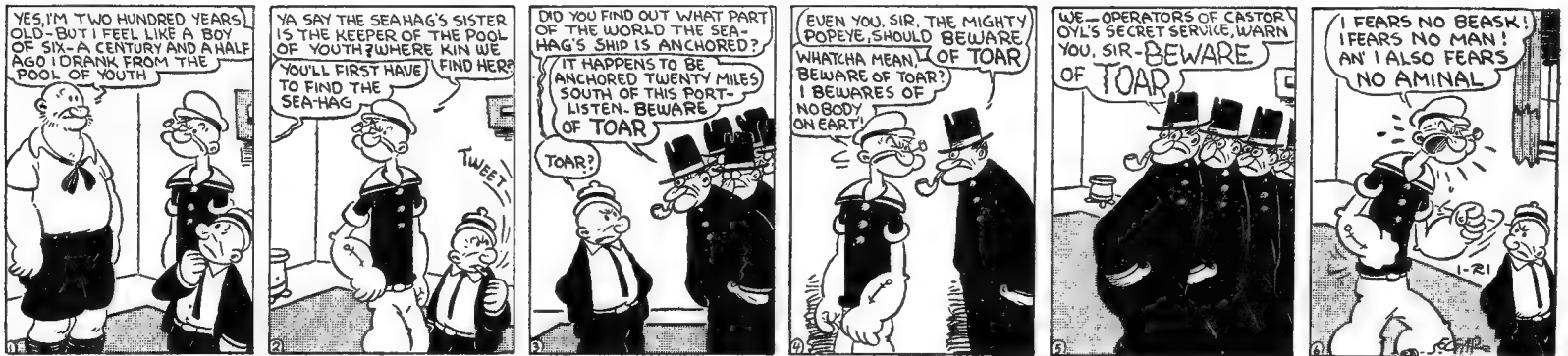


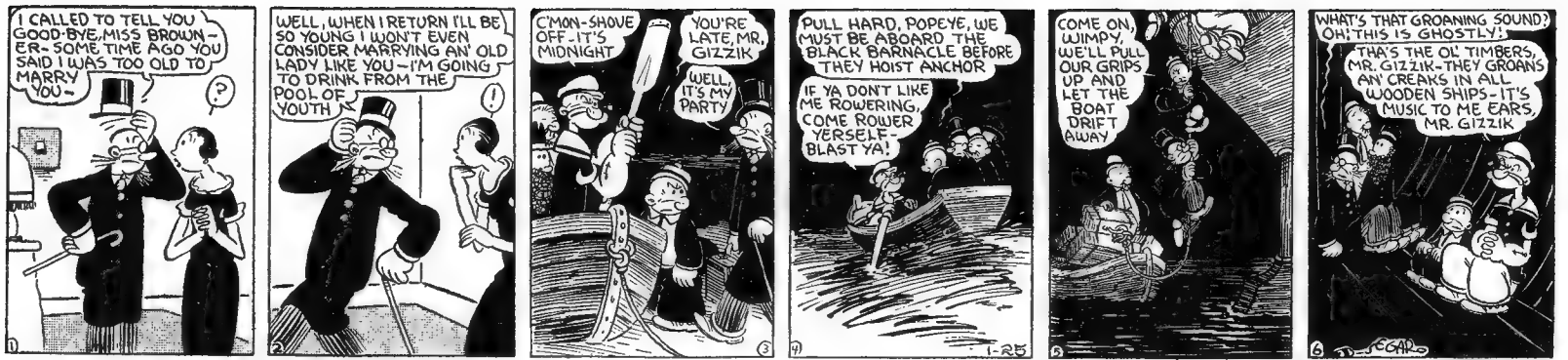




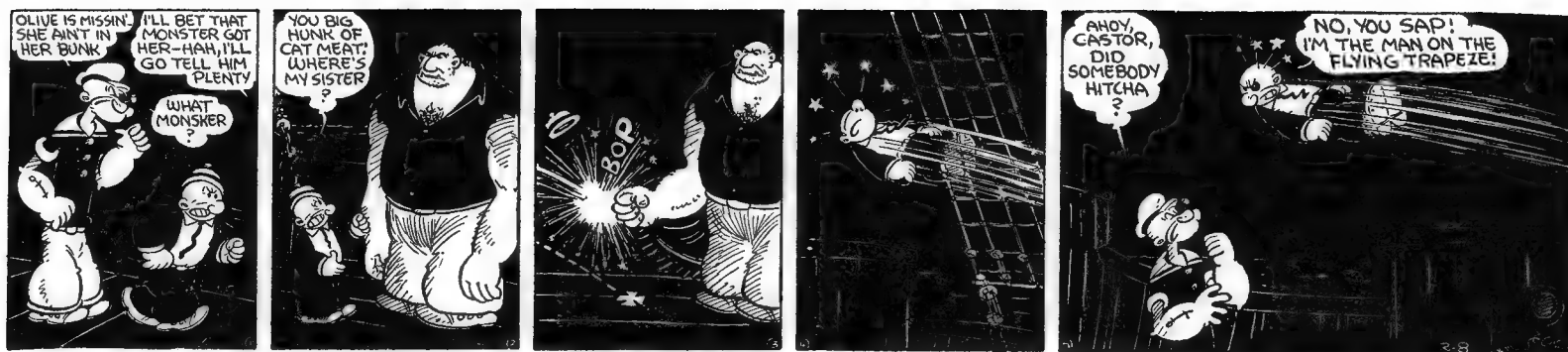
CHAPTER XIV: THE POOL OF YOUTH

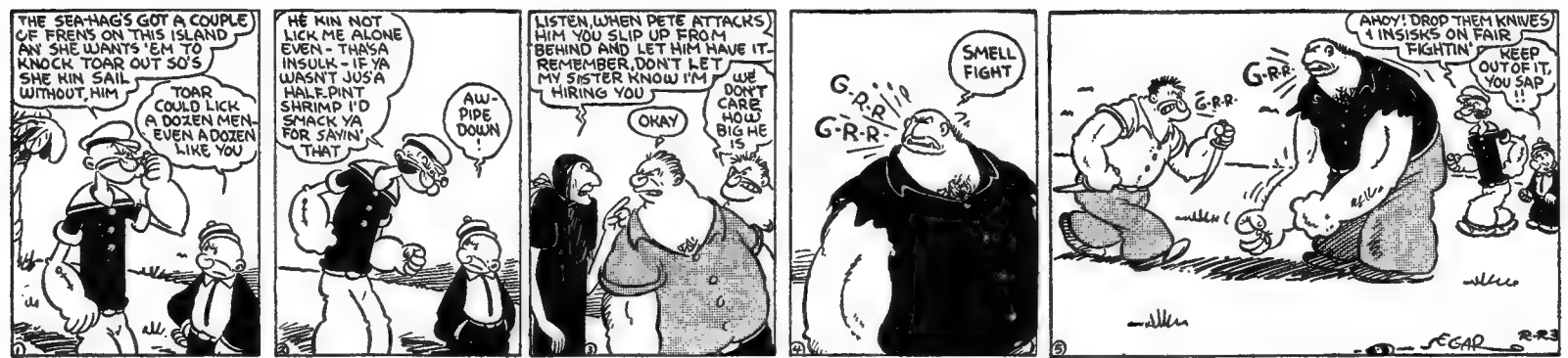




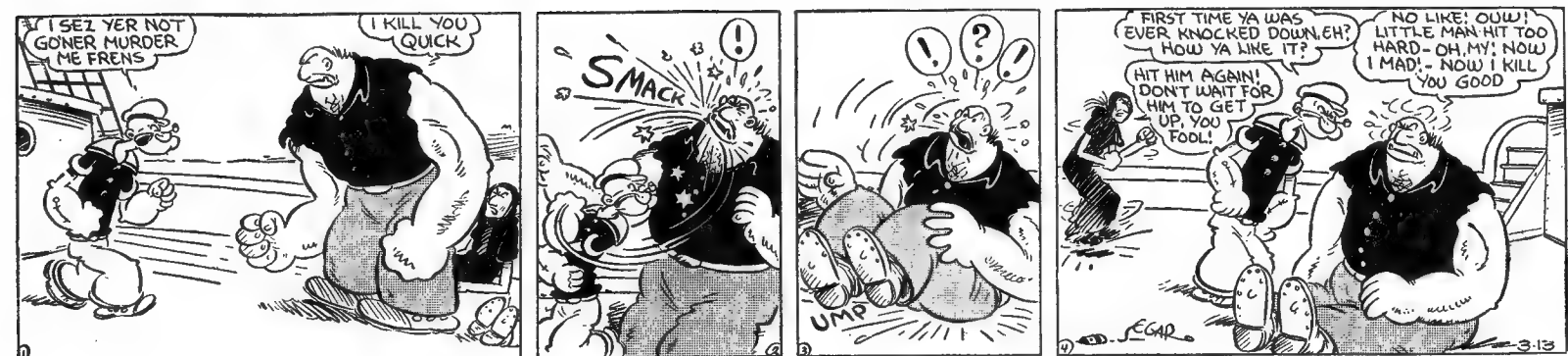
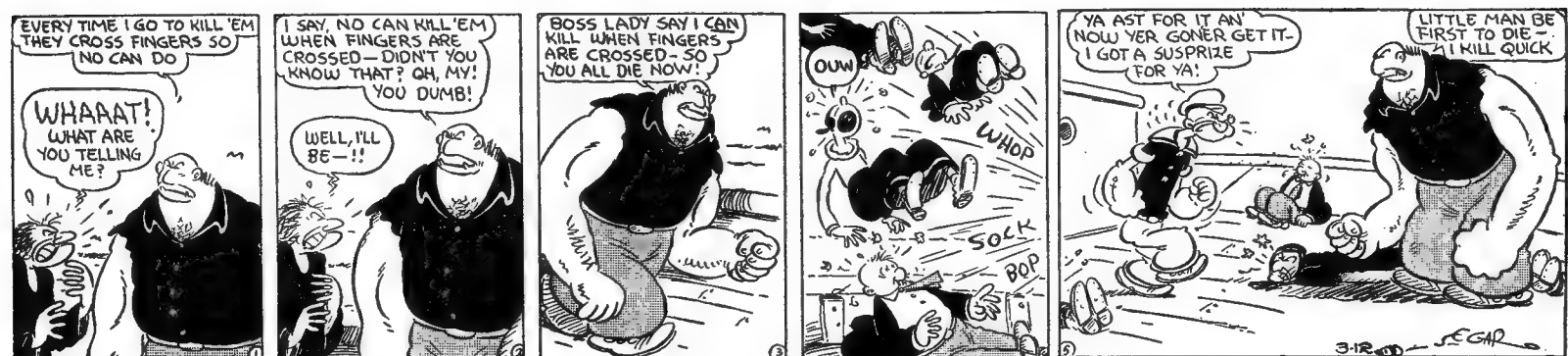








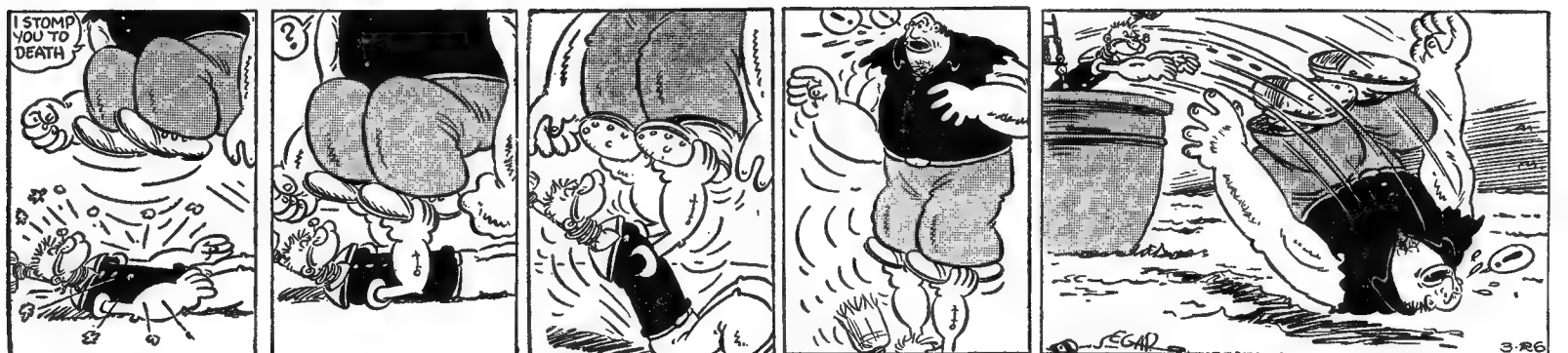
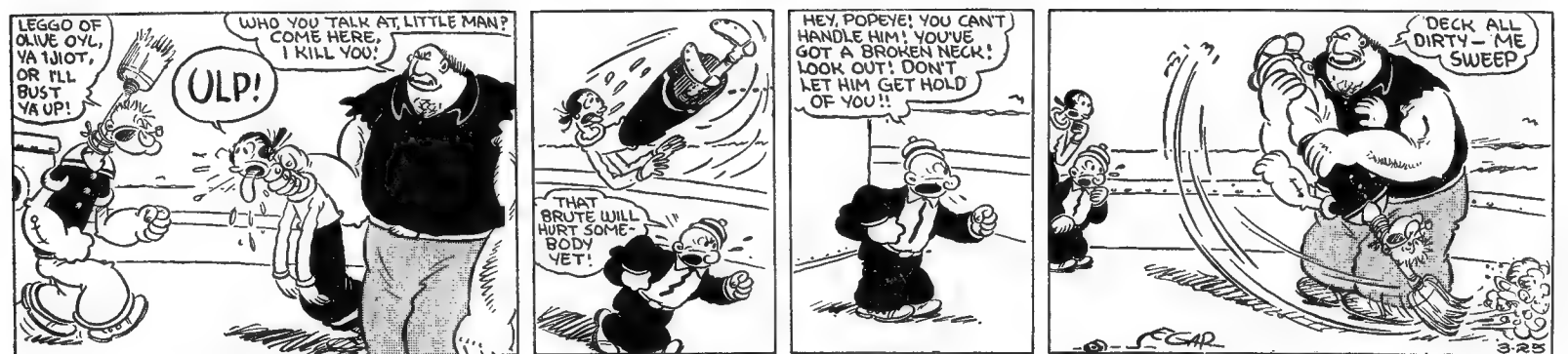
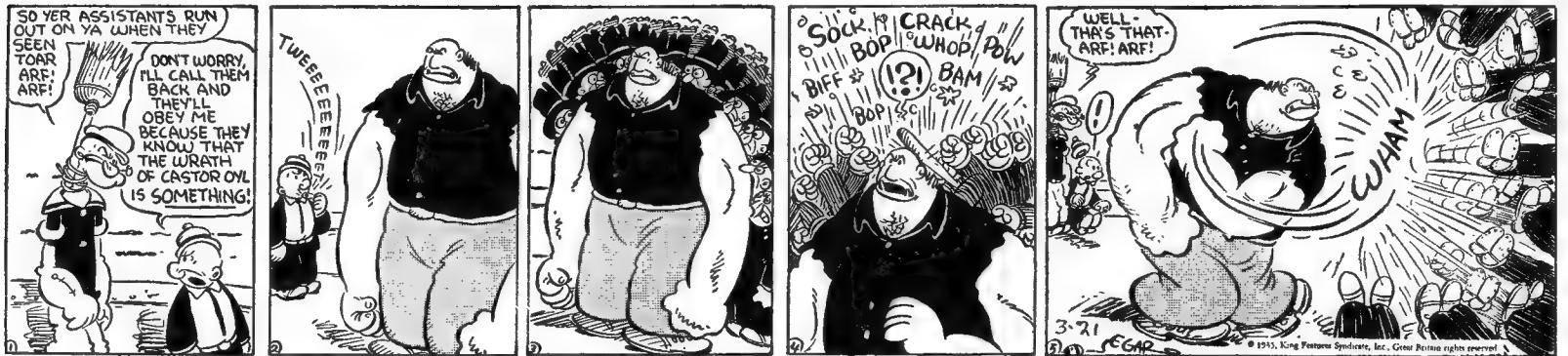
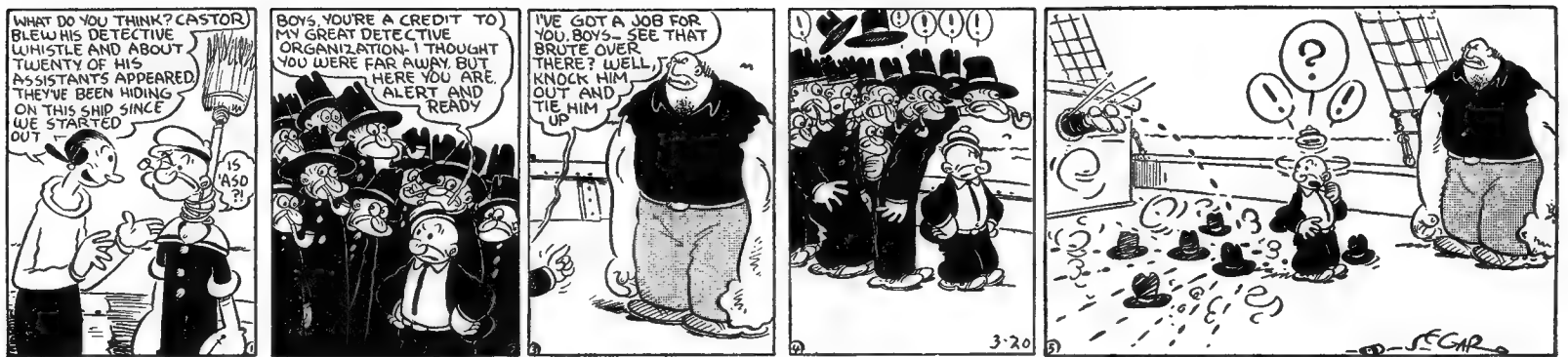


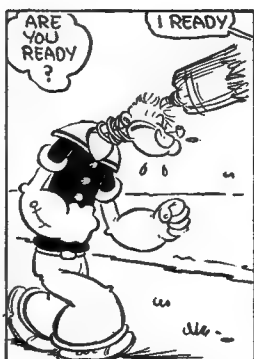
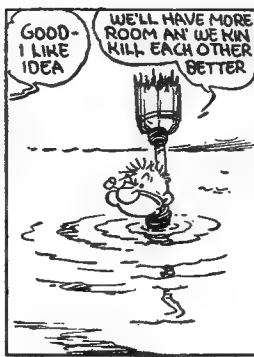
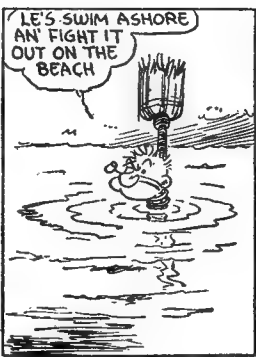
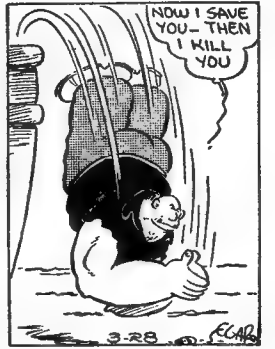
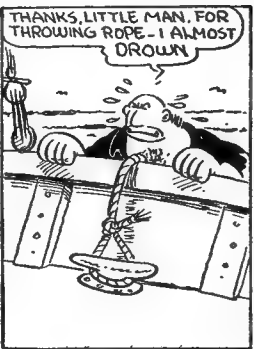
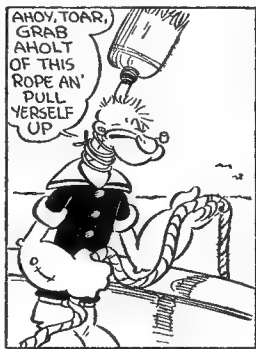
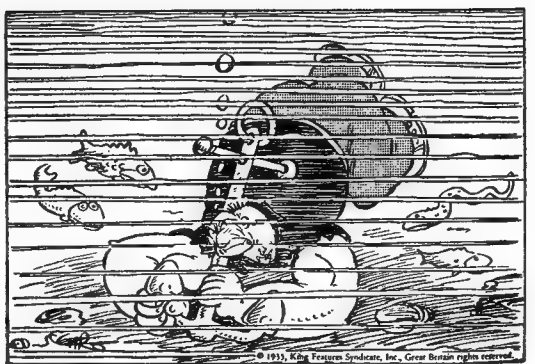
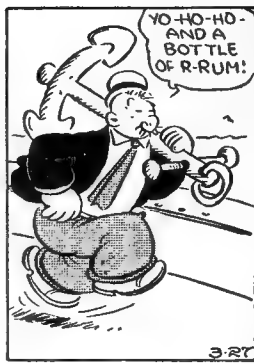


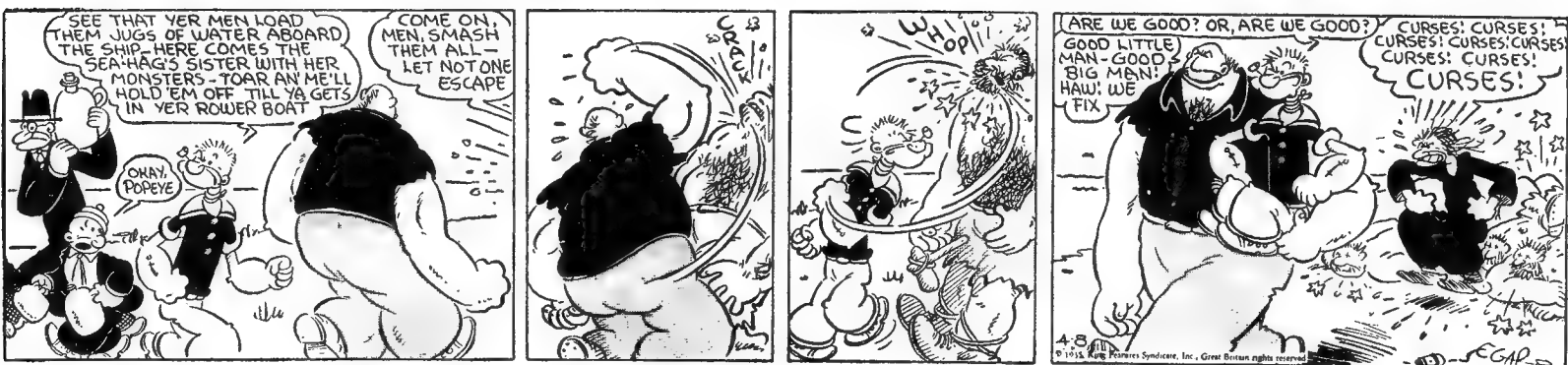
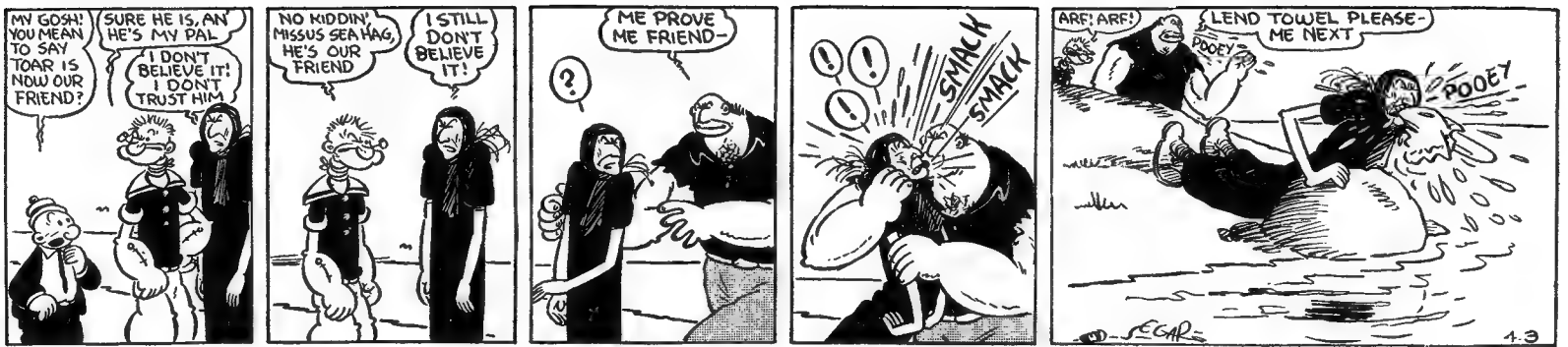


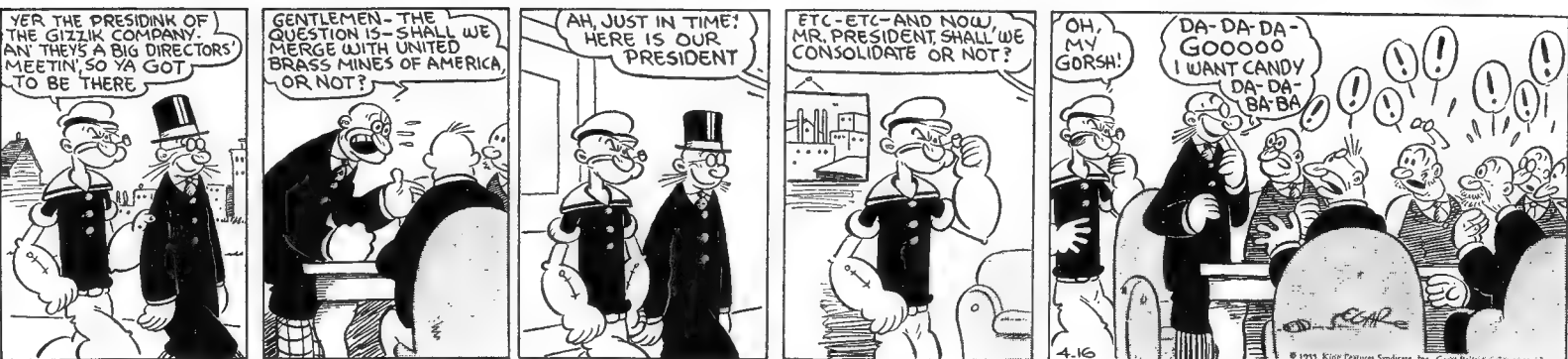
CHAPTER XVI:
SHAKE HANDS AN' BE FRENS

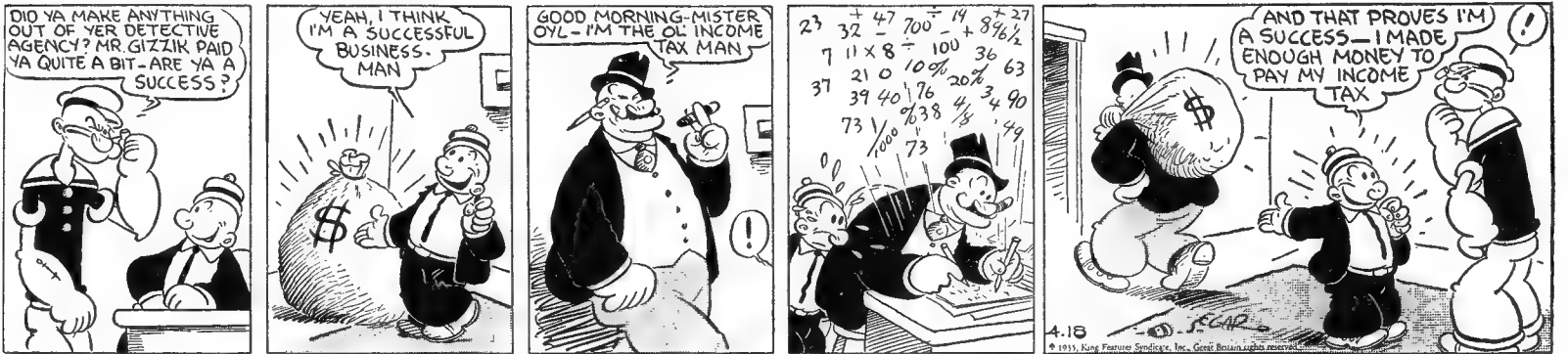




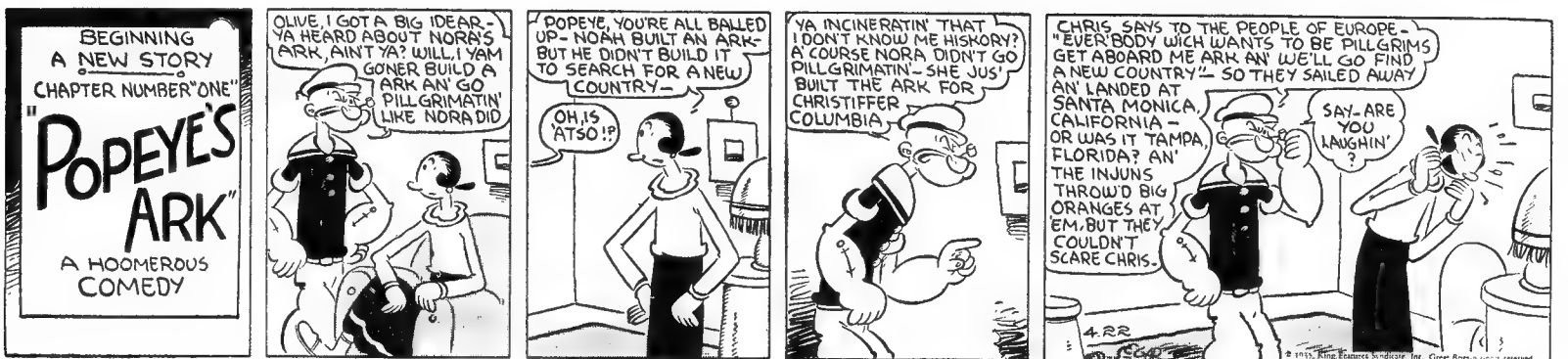


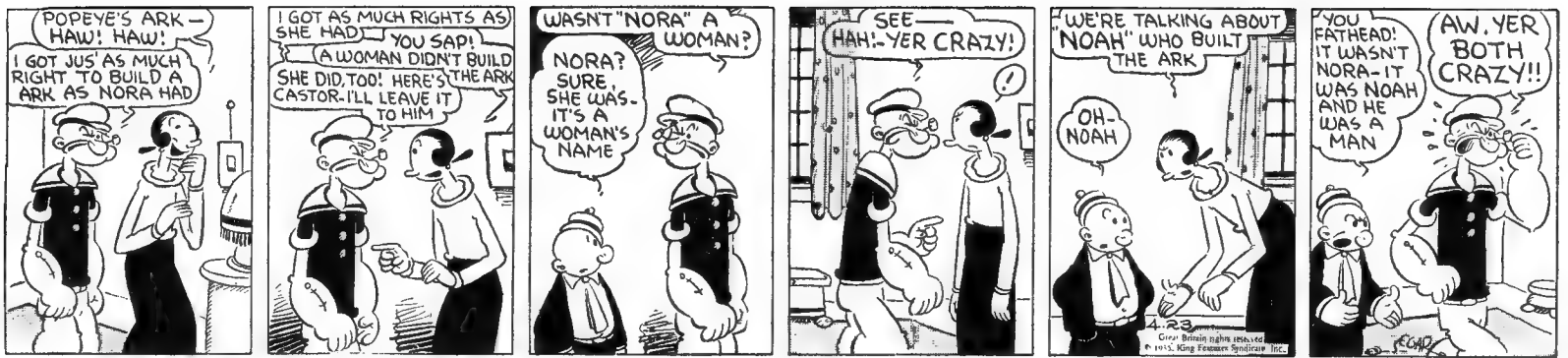


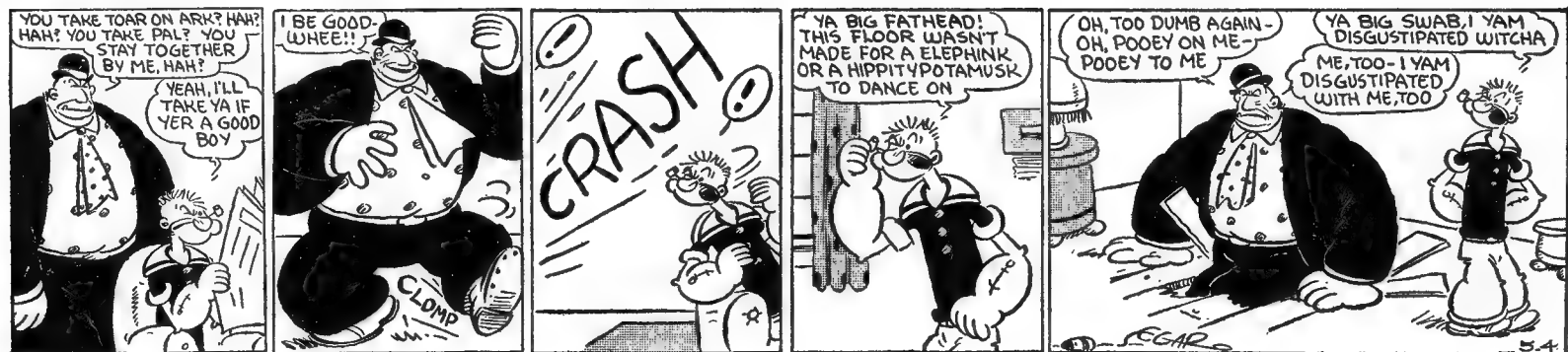
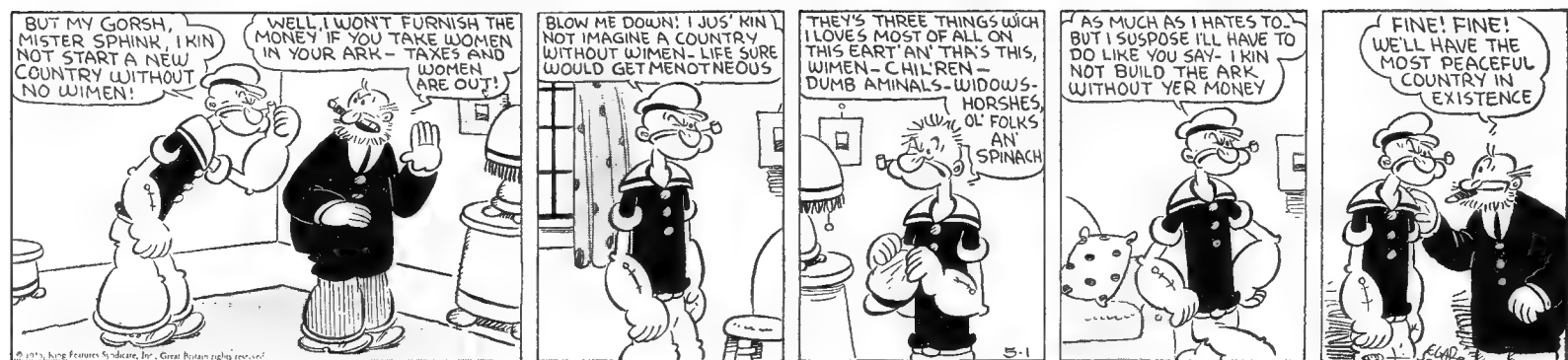


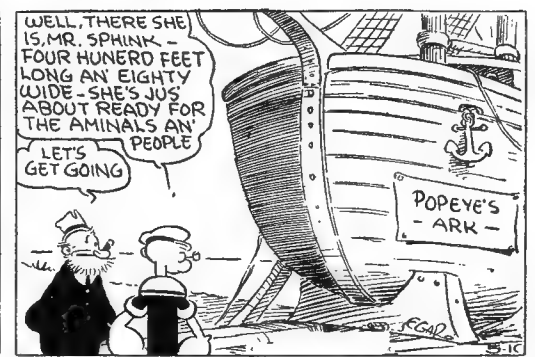
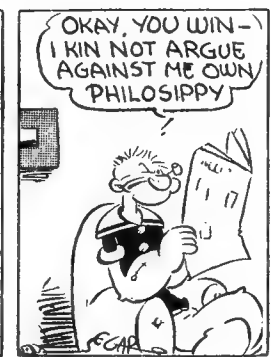
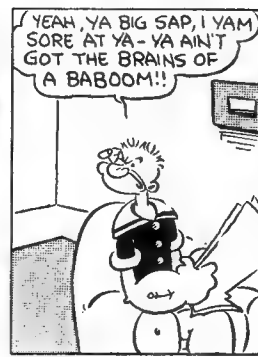


CHAPTER XVII: POPEYE'S ARK





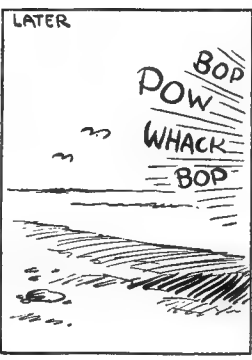
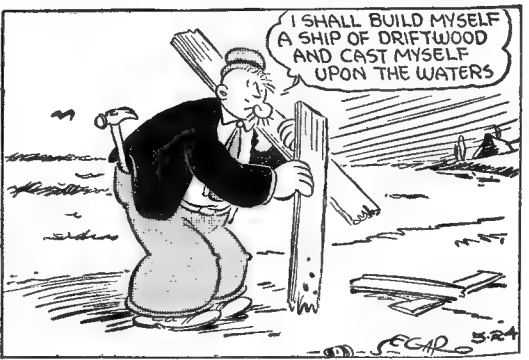
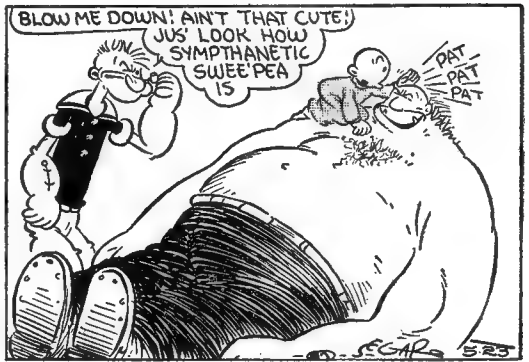
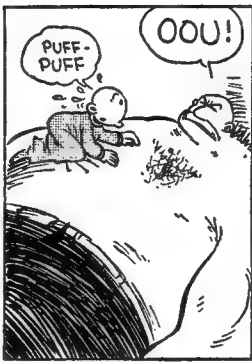
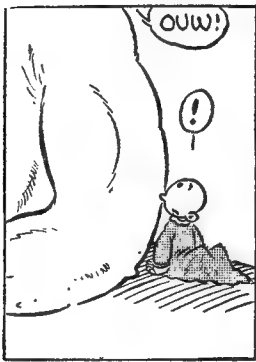


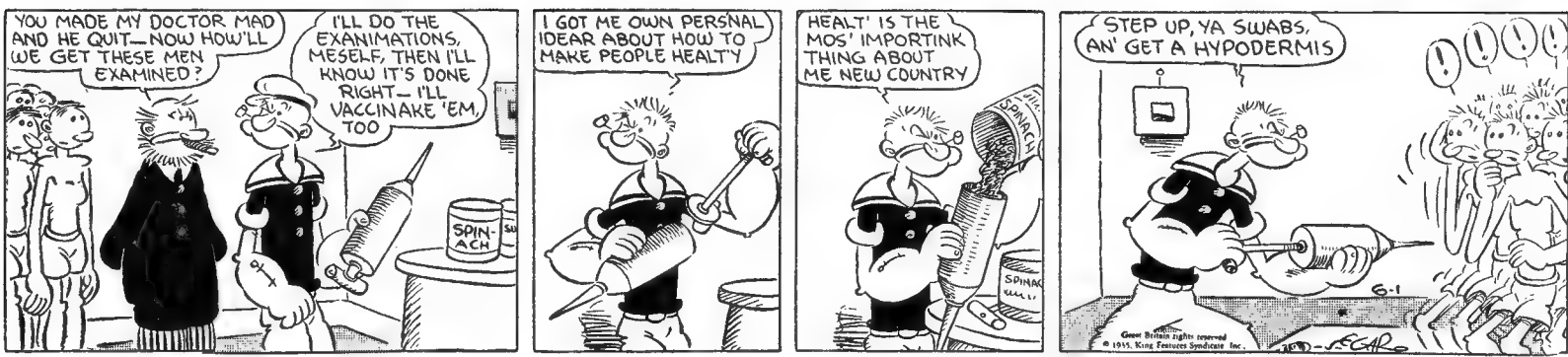
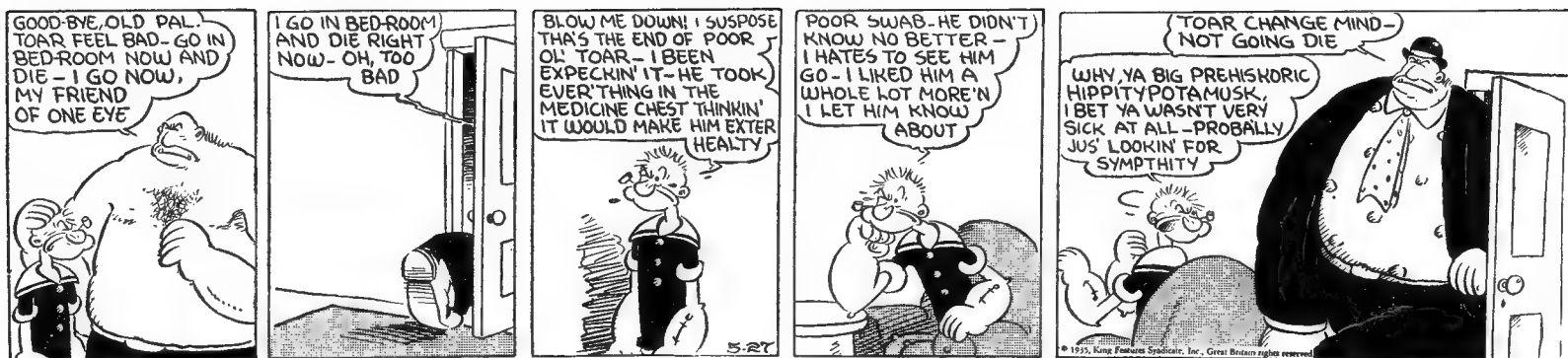


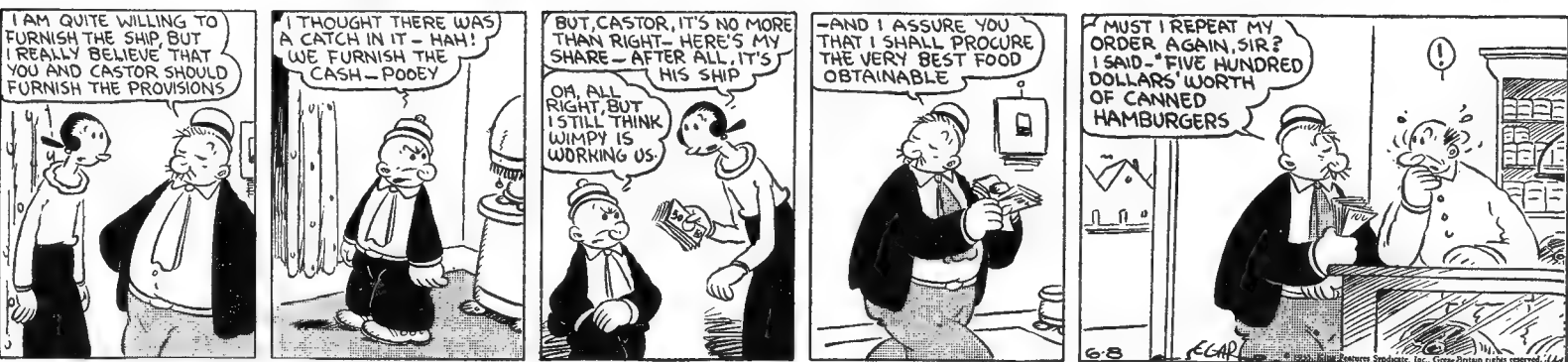
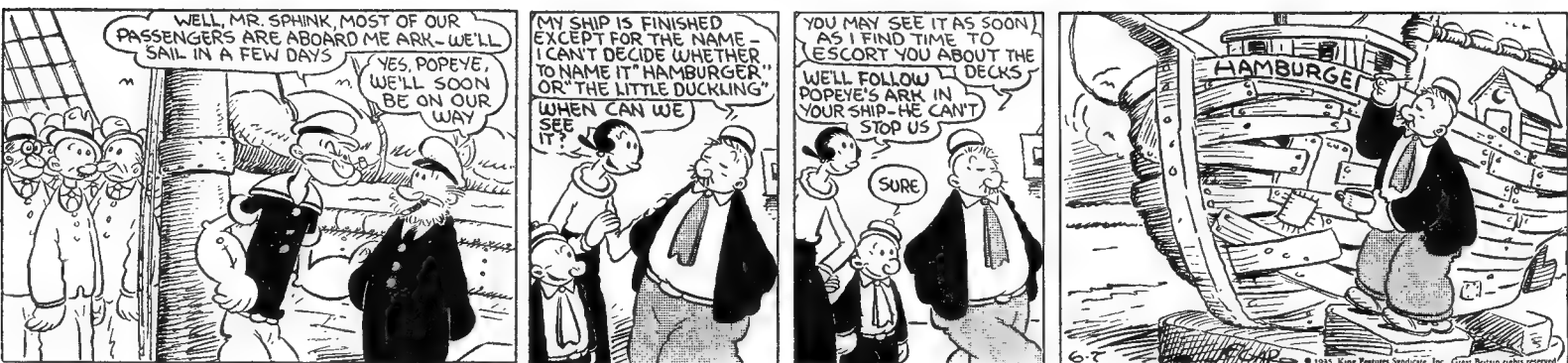
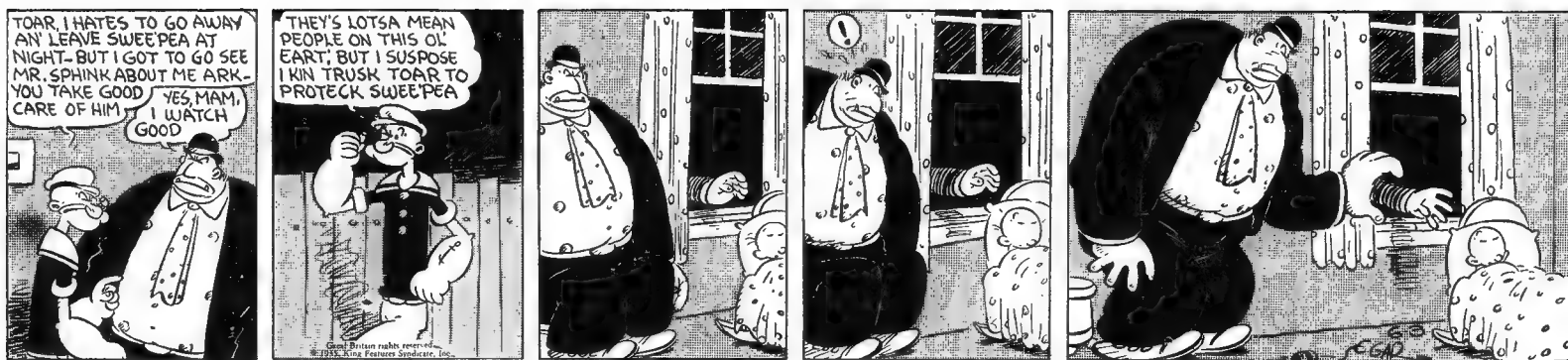


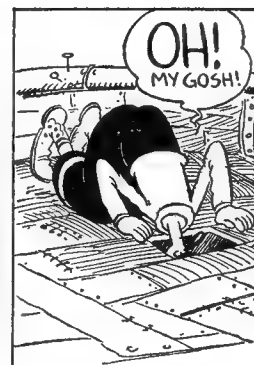
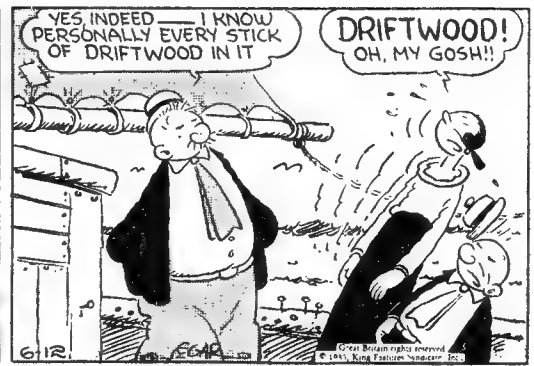
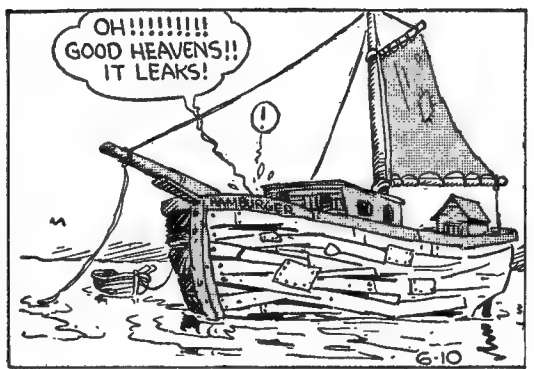
CHAPTER XVIII:
TOO MUCH MEDICINE

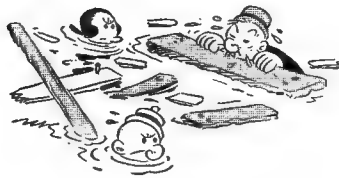




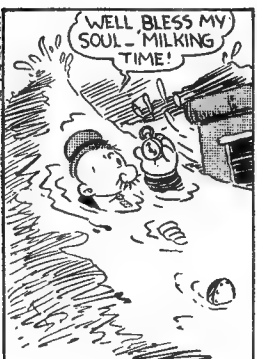
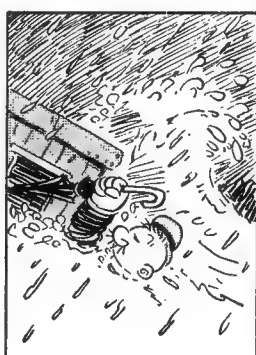
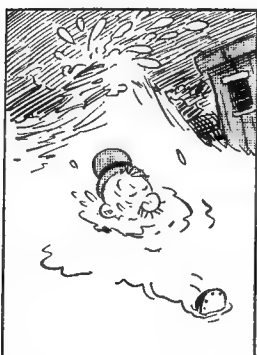
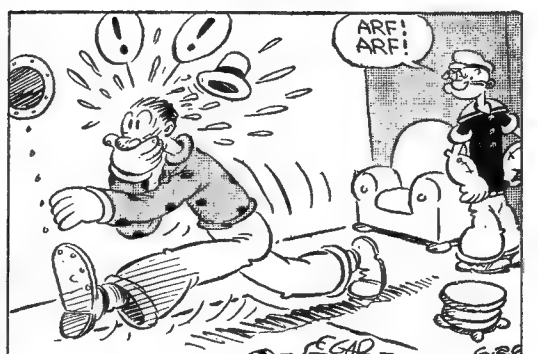
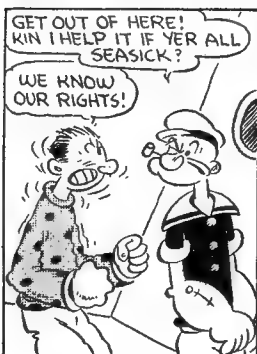
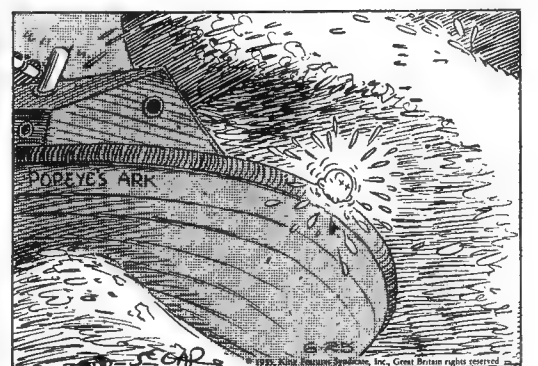


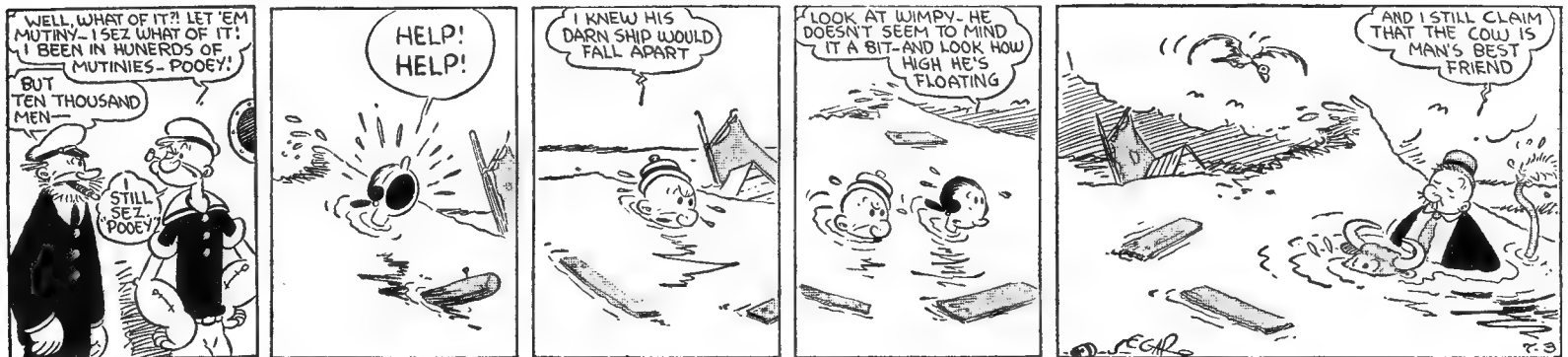
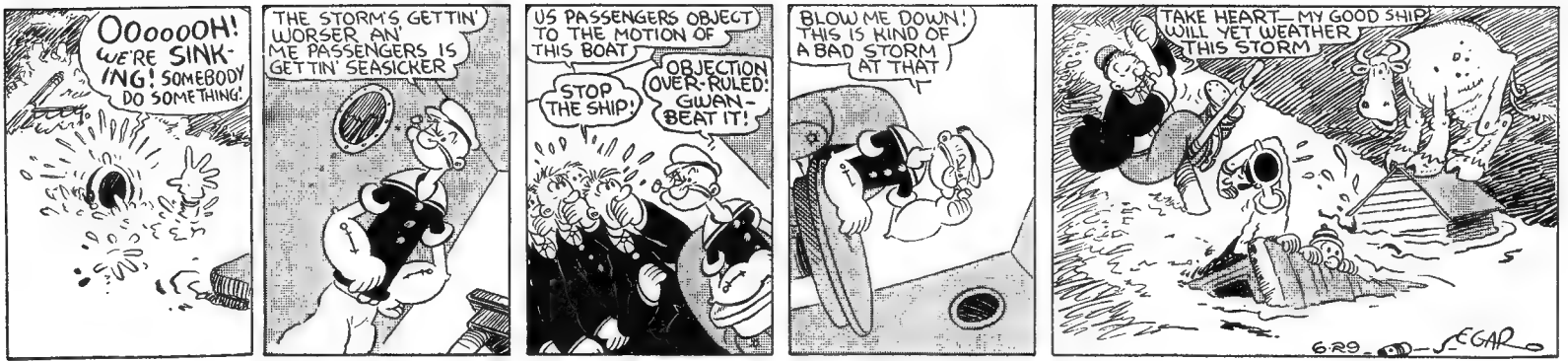


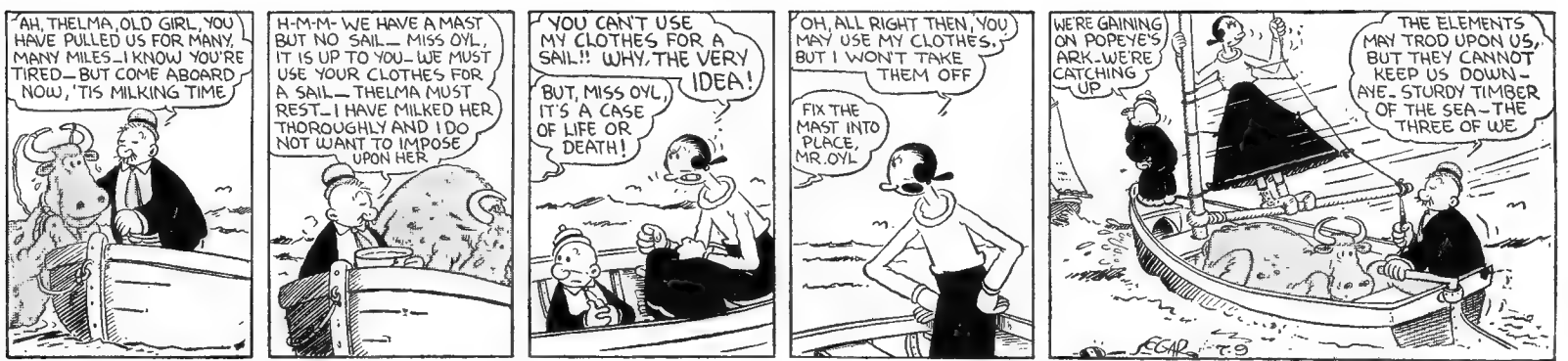
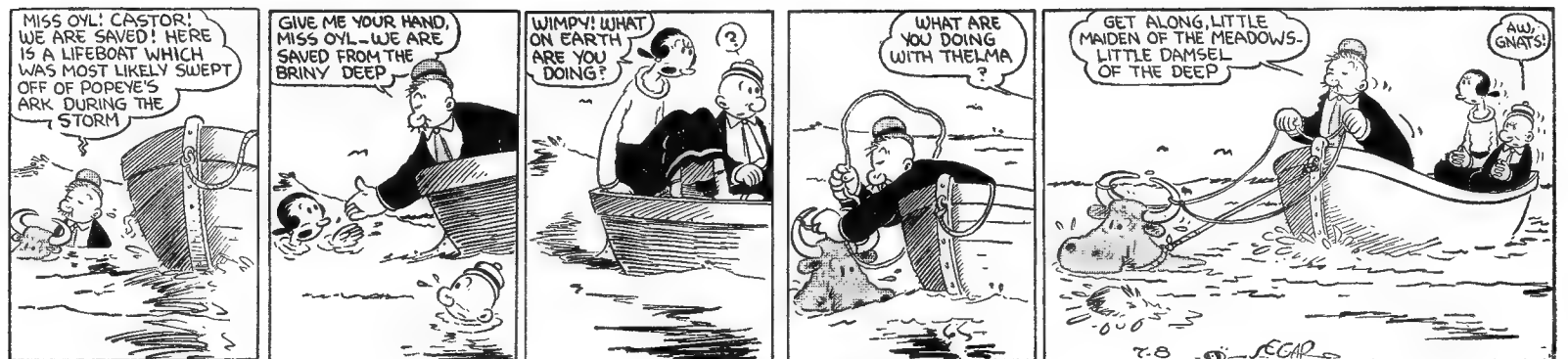


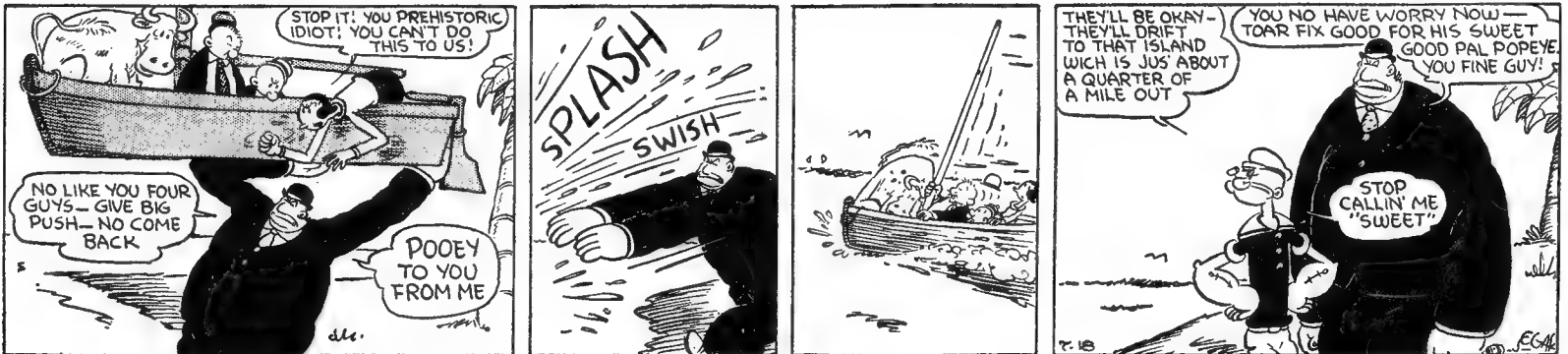
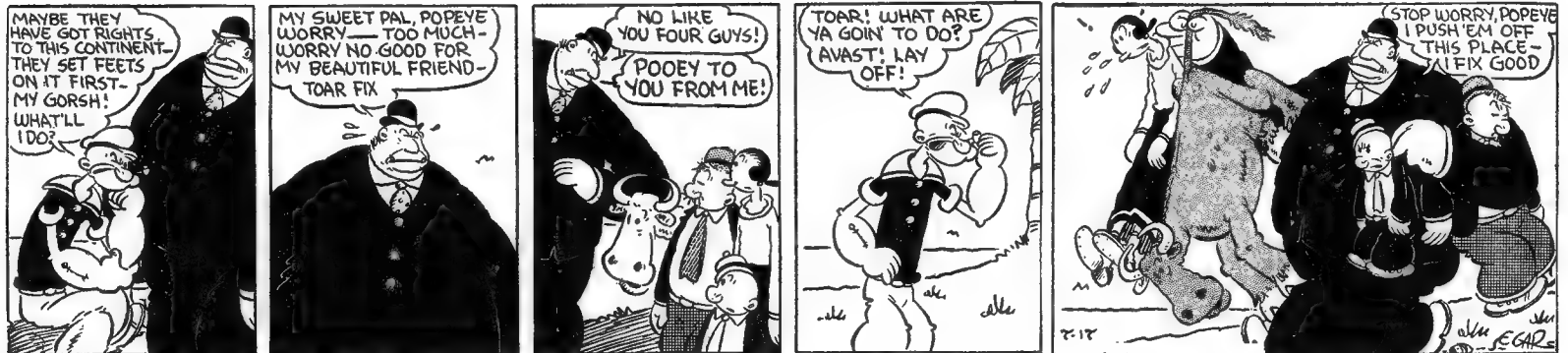
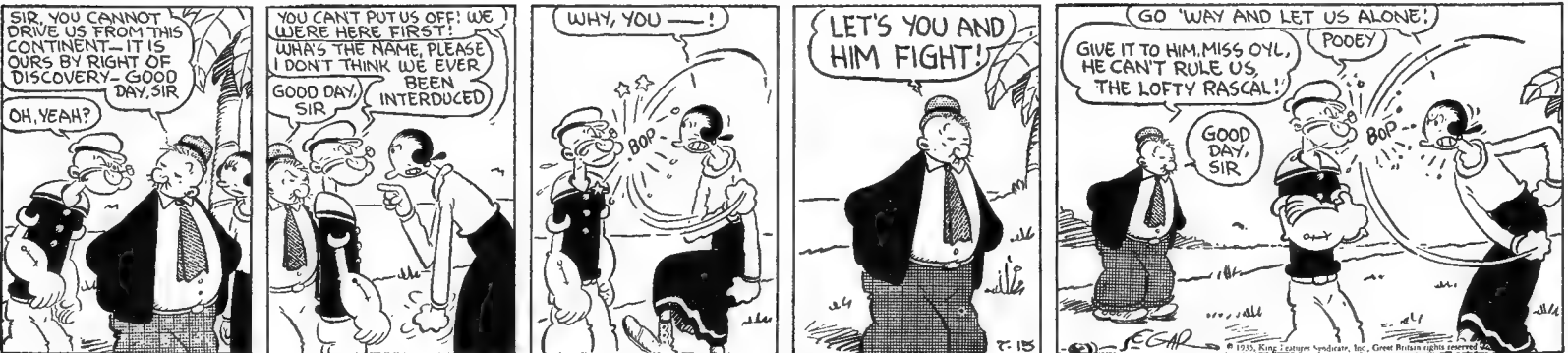


CHAPTER XIX:
SHIPWRECKED!











IN OUR NEXT VOLUME

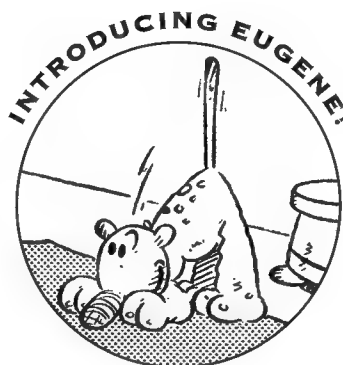
AVAILABLE FALL 2010



The conclusion to the
Spinachova-set yarn "Popeye's
Ark," begun in this volume!



In the five-month epic "War
Clouds," King Zlobber of Brutia
attacks Popeye's kingdom!



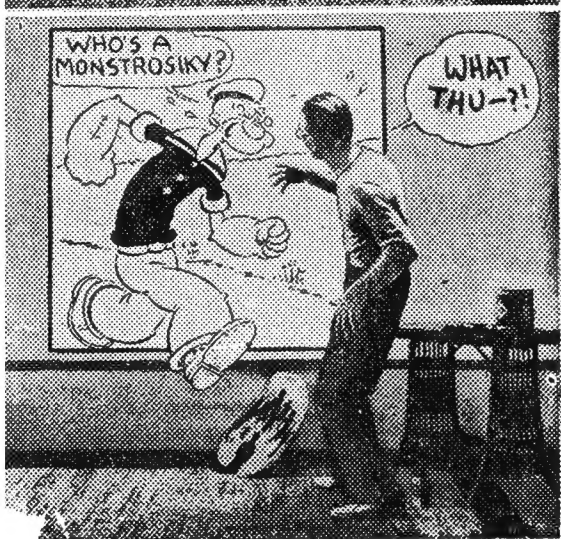
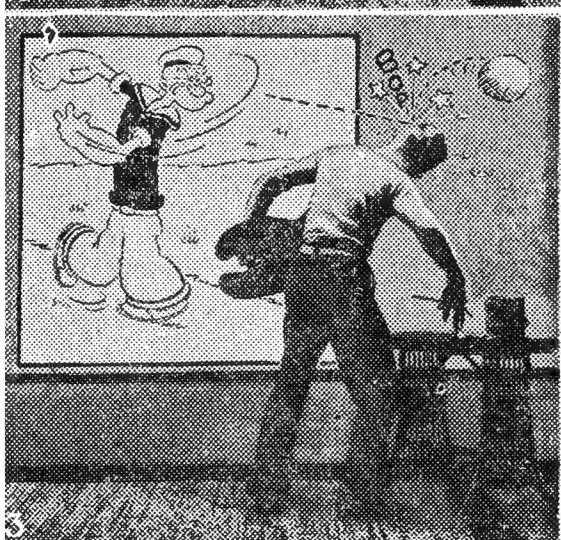
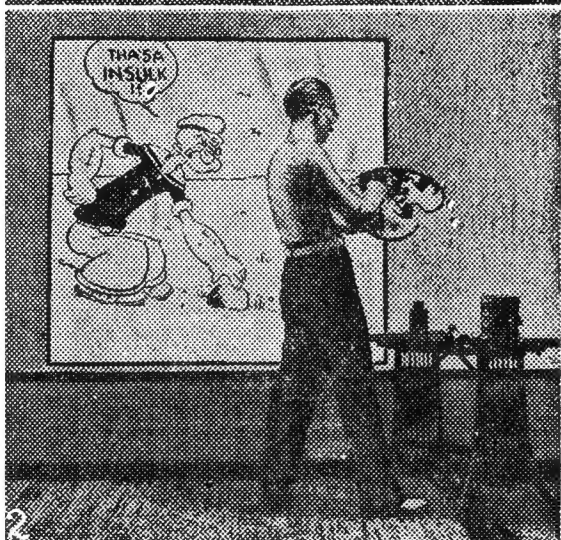
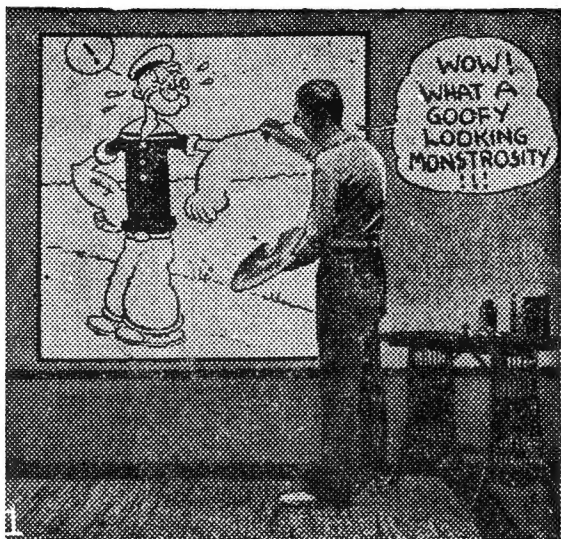
One of the Popeye series' most
beloved characters — the elusive,
prognosticating Jeep!



Popeye sets out to find his dad,
Poopdeck Pappy — and then
attempts to civilize him!

PLUS MUCH MORE, including Professor Wotasnozzle's career as a cartoonist (in the full-color Sappo Sunday strips)
and the classic 1935 "gold prospecting" Sunday Popeye sequence co-starring Wimpy and a very resourceful Sweet Pea!

Popeye Rocks Segar to Sleep and Avenges a "Insulk"



An amazing inside story of a wild studio fistic melée, involving the celebrated "Popeye," sailorman of fitching "fisks" and twitching heartstrings, and his equally celebrated creator, E. C. Segar, came to light today.

The famous Popeye cartoon strip will start Monday in The Humboldt Standard.

Our own cameraman, hidden in a chandelier, photographed the entire gruesome duel—using the new, patented camera which photographs words spoken instead of sounds uttered.

That "Popeye" should turn upon his papa—the man who made him what he is today—is appalling on the face of it. But Segar might have been forewarned. "Popeye" has been getting out of hand lately. His string of unprecedented victories against man and beast in the ring—and against armies single-handed on the field of battle—has filled the old salt with an unmanageable lust for combat.

In the first intimate photo accompanying you observe that Segar is drawing "Popeye's" elbow as he flings his cutting smartcrack at the sailorman. Ordinarily "Popeye" could take a flip remark as well as the next man, and the next, and the next, although the next man after that has him whipped on the score. (This man always puts tricks above the line, except the card-in-the-sleeve trick, which he puts beneath contempt.) However, in this case Segar was tickling the hair-triggered mariner's elbow.

"Popeye" can't stand that. In the next picture you see him grimly groping toward a wild Irish potato growing nearby. Segar, innocently toying with the handsome palette he would like to have his readers think is a present from Rembrandt, does not dream that he is about to be hanged on the schnozzle.

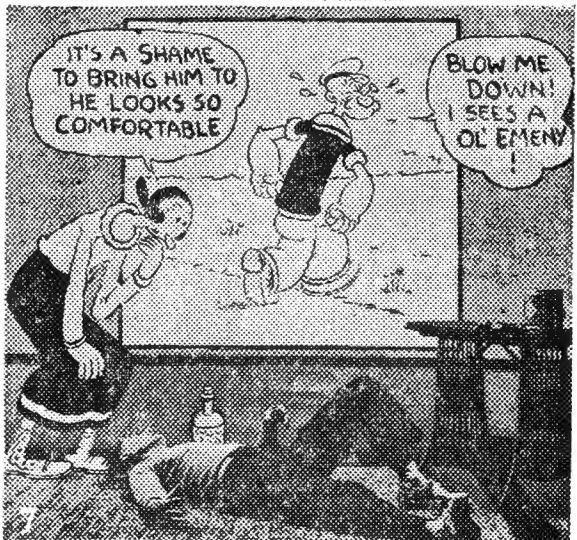
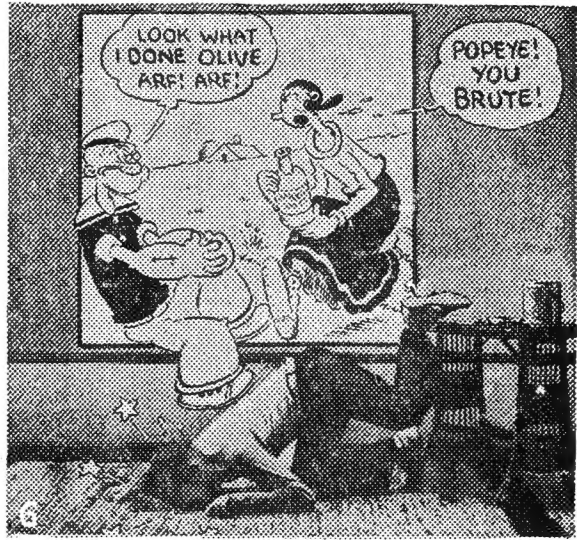
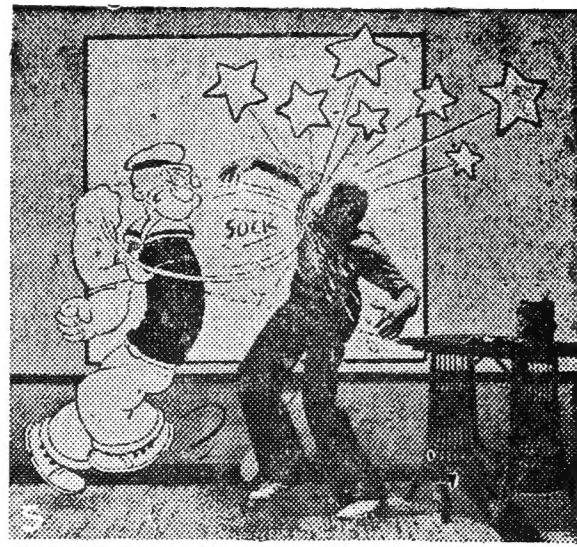
Whoops! The hurtling catapult of "Popeye's" fury has connected with Segar—striking him, by a fortunate miracle, in the head. The maltreated potato, groaning, ricochets to the floor and crawls away, crestfallen, to hide.

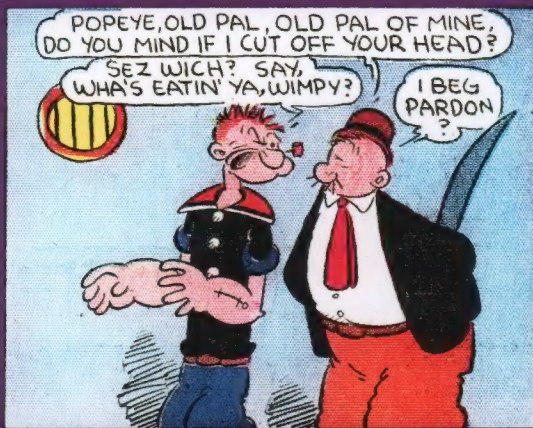
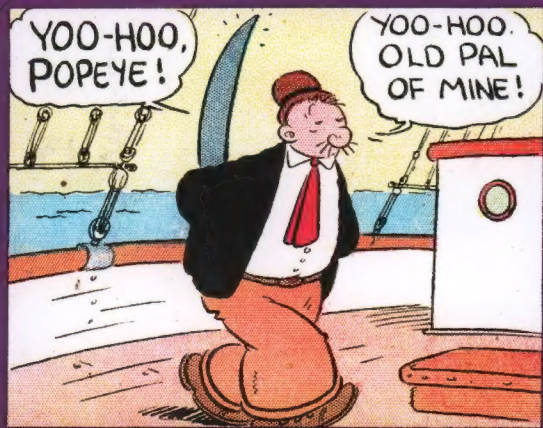
And now (see next picture, and why doesn't the audience join in singing this fine old song)—and now "Popeye" is barging straight out of his frame. He has just realized that Segar has framed him. "Popeye"—an old pal, too. He wants to finish his murderous task.

Now the famous "Popeye" finesse is seen in operation. The rush of wind from his fist has blown the landscape off the picture in background, as you can see. Mr. Segar, stimulating the third movement of the wing tap, is about to go into a swan dive. He did not believe it possible—this sweet, piping music which he hears so plainly.

In picture number six the sex angle of the little drama centers on the run. Olive Oyl ("Popeye's" sweetie) stimulates concern for the fallen cartoonist, but in reality she wants to revive him in the hope that he will draw her at the next polka. Then comes picture number seven.

And number eight! Olive has obtained a fine, active brand of smelling salts, but in response to her whispered inquiry, the chemical has responded that it doesn't smell a thing. It can be seen that "Popeye" is fighting again, Segar is regaining consciousness as far as it goes and the dawn, the sun, a house and lot or something is coming up over the horizon.





THIMBLE THEATRE PRESENTS:
COMPLETE IN THIS VOLUME IS THE
GREATEST POPEYE EPIC EVER TOLD!



Also includes an essay on the influence of theater and film on Popeye by comics historian Richard Marschall — and a rarely seen fumetto pitting Popeye against his creator!

In December of 1933 — at the halfway point of his too-short run on the strip he had created — E.C. Segar launched his motley cast on its greatest adventure ever — an epic comedy/thriller pitting Popeye, Olive, and Wimpy against the sinister Sea Hag and the frankly disturbing Goon that lasted a full half year and featured some of the most hilarious, outlandish, and (yes) terrifying moments in the entire series.

Previously only reprinted piecemeal or in black and white, "Plunder Island" is finally presented here in its uncut, full-color glory.

But that's only a small fraction of the treasures lurking within the pages of this volume, which include:

"Puddleburg," in which Popeye takes over a newspaper and hires "B. Loony Bullony," the world's most depressed cartoonist.

"Romance to Riches": Popeye and Olive's attempts at social climbing go as horribly wrong as you would expect.

"Unifruit," co-starring the eternally worried King Blozo of Nazilia, and featuring their battle against "The White Savages."

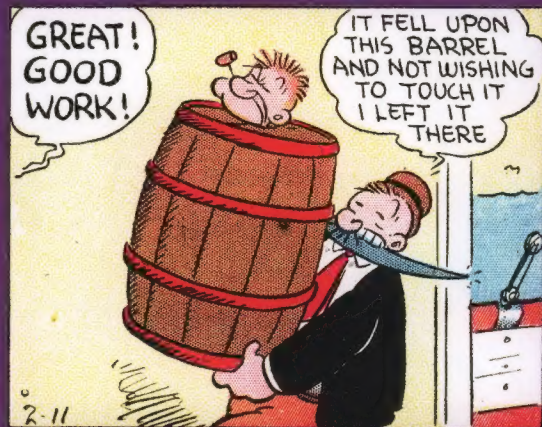
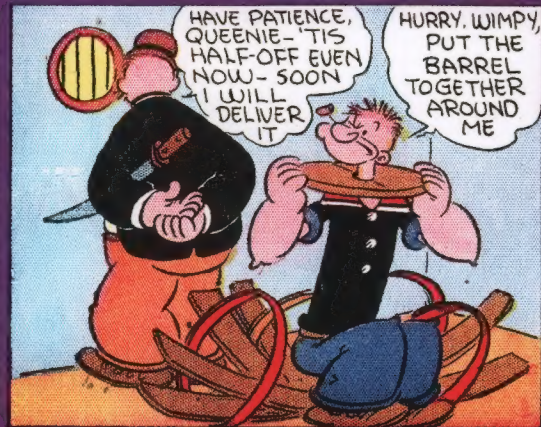
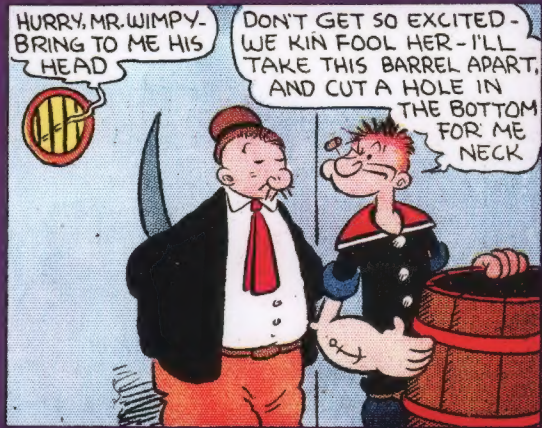
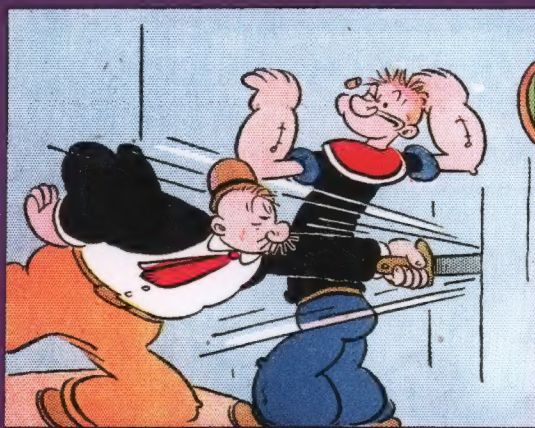
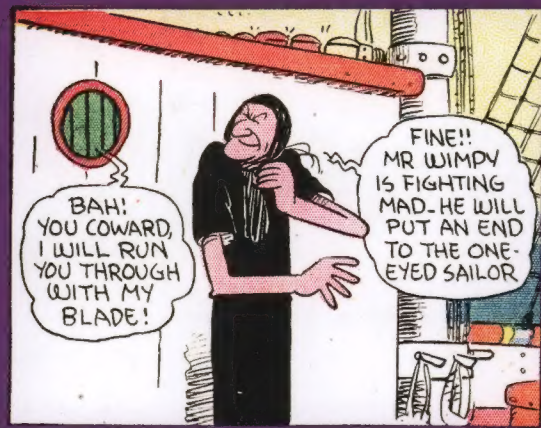
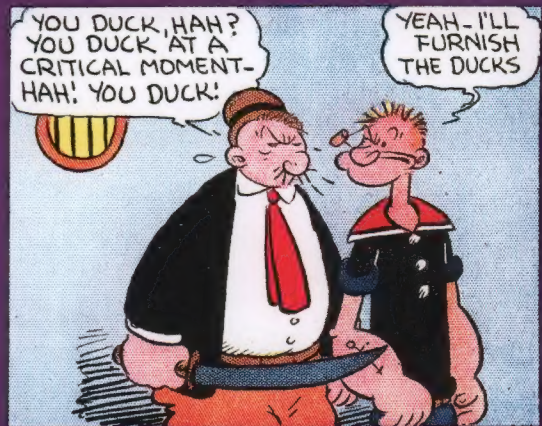
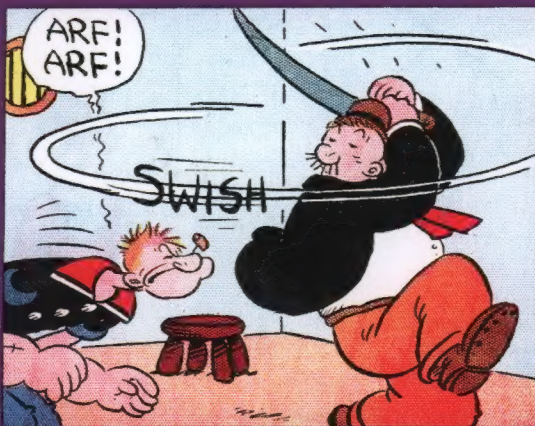
"Black Valley," one of Segar's inimitable Western stories, boasting (among other things) the unforgettable sight of Popeye in drag.

"The Pool of Youth," featuring the return of the Sea Hag, accompanied by her sister and the mountainous, 20,000-year-old Toar.

Plus the first part of another six-month epic, "Popeye's Ark!"



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